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Cover picture

S. S. McClure, Willa Cather, Theodore Dreiser and Paul Robeson at the National Institute of Art and Letters, New York, 1944. The photograph is reproduced from *Willa Cather: A pictorial memoir* with photographs by Lucia Woods and others, text by Barbra Blot (134pp, University of Nebraska Press, £23.75, 0 8032 8226 6).

Hearths in the wilderness

A. S. Byatt

SHARON O'BRIEN
Willa Cather: The emerging voice
Oxford University Press, £22.50.
019041321
SHARON O'BRIEN
The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's
novelism
Lincoln: Nebraska University Press.
1985.
232238746

Was any woman ever really had the art instinct, the art necessity? Willa Cather asked in 1916, when she was herself twenty-three and passionately ambitious. She was reviewing the autobiography of the American actress Mary Anderson, who had abandoned the stage to become Mme Navarro. Mme Navarro was, the young Cather observed, "a sane, normal and highly gifted woman" whose art, like much women's art, had been "a substitute, a transferred enthusiasm, an escape valve for what she sought or is seeking another channel". Cather praised Navarro's humanity, but comforted herself with the existence of "Sappho and the two great Georges". "They had it genuinely; they tried other things and none could satisfy them."

She herself had graduated, brilliant and wayward, in 1895 from the University of Nebraska, fastidiously class, a trenchant and shocking journalist, reading five languages, supported and encouraged by what must have been an almost ideal academic environment. She must have known that she herself had indeed "the art necessity" and along with it the anxieties that beset a woman with that drive. In a peroration in another article in the same year, she declared that neither great thoughts nor great emotions were particularly rare in the world, but that great expression—"mighty craft"—was so demanding for many to succeed. "In the Kingdom of Art there is no God but one God", she declared, "and his service is so exacting that there are few men born of woman who are strong enough to take the vows." She likened the search for art to a crusade across a burning desert in which only mad pilgrims "without homes" could survive, and at the end of which there was no paradise, no bowers, no hours; "only death and the truth". "Thy truth then be thy power", she concluded, quoting without attribution King Lear's rejection of his ungrateful daughter.

How did she become the major artist she was? Sharon O'Brien meant to write a full-length biography of Cather, and has ended by following her career only to her first major novel, *O Pioneers!* (1913). Her biography, full of wisdom and good things, is a feminist biography, influenced particularly, she says, by the ideas of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* and Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*. Willa Cather obviously disliked the whole idea of the personal invasion represented by biography; she left ambargos on the publication of her letters and made access to her papers difficult. She would also, Ms O'Brien concedes immediately, have resented any discussion of her as a lesbian writer. O'Brien began with the intention of respecting Cather's privacy, and came to the conclusion, after reading Cather's correspondence with her college friend, the eminent scholar Louise Pound, that the term "lesbian" "did in fact capture Cather's self-definition". It is one of the paradoxes of feminist thought that discussions designed to liberate women from narrowly prescriptive, gender-based descriptions and definitions are themselves inevitably intensely preoccupied with gender and sexuality. It is meaningless to ask what Miss Cather would have made of this book. She is dead, and O'Brien's readers are indeed "more enlightened" than those earlier ones. The biography's findings are compulsive reading, truly illuminating, and yet somehow constricting and distorting.

Cather was born in Virginia, and uprooted and taken to the prairies of Nebraska at the age of eight. O'Brien offers a vivid account of her grandparents of both sexes and her pretty, feminine, nervous mother. Christened Willa, the child early adopted a male identity, becoming William Cather Jr or Billy, and dressing, even as an undergraduate, in masculine shirts and ties, with close-cropped hair. O'Brien argues persuasively and in detail that she was only able to embark on her great art when she had accepted her female nature and indeed her sexuality and her love of women. As a young woman Cather admired Flaubert and Mérimée, Flaubert, Kipling and Stevenson. She wanted to write, she declared, like Henry James, who "dazzled her", and was "the foremost mind that ever applied itself to literature in America". She herself described her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, as a mistaken attempt to emulate James and Edith Wharton; it is a symbolic narrative about an engineer

whose work of art, a frail bridge, collapses as his attempt to negotiate his love for his wife and his mistress collapses; it is set in drawing-rooms and theatres. O'Brien (ignoring Wharton) sees this use of a male artistic "father" as doomed to failure. Cather, according to feminist beliefs, needed to discover a female tradition in which to write, symbolic mothers for her novels, and found what she needed in her graceful relationship to Sarah Orne Jewett, who provided her both with a stylistic model and with a model lifestyle of civilized female friendship and cohabitation. Cather was at the time working as the editor of *McClure's*, ghosting its proprietor's memoirs in their male voice. Miss Jewett wrote her a decisive letter, which, O'Brien says, should be seen as an event as important in the history of letters as Emerson's congratulatory letter to Whitman. Miss Jewett told Willa Cather that she would never write what she was capable of writing in the job she was in, and Cather, bravely and rightly, gave up her glamorous world and set about her true work. What Cather learned from Miss Jewett was that "the magnitude of the subject matter is not of primary importance, seemingly". Miss Jewett wrote exquisitely crafted sketches of New England moors and scenery, which Cather compared to the idylls of Theocritus. She had a perfect ear, and a quality of evocation—a vague word, but there is no better—that became for Cather a touchstone of great art.

It must leave in the mind of a sensitive reader an intangible residuum of pleasure; a cadence, a quality of voice that is exclusively the writer's own, individual, unique. A quality that one can remember without the volume at hand, can experience over and over again in the mind but can never absolutely define.

These qualities—the residuum of pleasure, the indefinable cadence, the uniqueness of the individual—are all of them now the reverse of modish as aesthetic values. One could argue wickedly that if that was all Cather and Jewett had, they would be inexorably relegated to the minor and insignificant. The theoretical and socialist American 1930s indeed relegated Cather's work to the realm of the pastoral and the elegiac, and disapproved of what they saw as her reactionary antagonism to the age of the machine and rapid communication. Feminism, and the politicizing of sexuality and homosexuality, can make her work seem urgent in a way that is partly misleading.

Take, for instance, the landscape. Cather has described certain parts of the earth as no

one else has described them, or anywhere else. The endless plains of Nebraska and the Great Divide, in all seasons, the dry air and clear light in the canyons of Colorado, the stones of New Mexico, the rock of Quebec, facing apparently limitless forests. She claimed that the new form of her novels—starting with *O Pioneers!* when she found her new subject-matter—was a function of that land. Her perceptive friend E. S. Sergeant wrote that:

When I let her know that the only flaw I could find in *O Pioneers!* was that it had no sharp skeleton she swiftly replied, true enough, I had named a weakness. But the land has no sculptured lines or features. The soil is soft, light, fluent black, for the grass of the plains creates this type of soil as it decays. This influences the mind and memory of the author and so the composition of the story.

This—not a metaphor but a description—is the best summing-up I know of Cather's remarkable style and method of composition. Her people are functions of natural processes—growth and decay, energy and inertia, as lively as grass, as the leaves of grass invoked by the title from Whitman, as the grass that comes up and is cut down to our human grief in the words of the burial service. "Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow and never continueth in one stay."

These vague undefined landscapes have taken on very precise significance in feminist criticism, and are described in very different language. Ellen Moers wrote of women writers' predilection for caverns and canyons shaped like wombs and instanced the canyons in Cather's *Song of the Lark* which her singer-heroine sees as an analogy of her own throat, a container for the flow of song or art or life. O'Brien draws on Chodorow's idea that women have "permeable ego-boundaries" to psychoanalyse Cather's lifelong fear of the boundless openness of the prairies which represented to her "a kind of erasure of the personality" where "there was nowhere to hide". This becomes over-ingeniously a fear of her own "non-nurturing" mother—and the land becomes Nature, America and Virginia Cather in a few paragraphs. In the same way, when Cather and her most important friend, Isabelle McClung, visit Le Lavandou on an early European journey, their pleasure in figs, peaches, langoustines, in the villagers' ability to "make a savoury dish of almost anything that grows", and in the sight of a reaper, reminiscent of a Nebraskan one, are all remorselessly knitted

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300pp. 0 521 33294 X £27.50 net

Cambridge University Press

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John C. 116

into a pattern of "her psychic and emotional past, led back to maternal powers" from "a paternal memory, which leads not to public reminders of patriarchy, but to . . . a landscape imbued with female presence".

It is not that these connections do not exist. Freud has shown us that we are ineluctably tied to our biological identity, that we force other things in the world to symbolize *that* to us, our infantile history, our human desire. Willa Cather wrote with disapproval of a "world violently inoculated with Freud" and wouldn't read him. Georgia O'Keeffe maintained stubbornly that her South-West landscapes were not sexual, though their declivities and openings, their flushed interiors and minor protrusions inevitably appear so to us. Emerson observed of his own system of transcendental symbolism, "Not only man puts things in a row but things belong in a row." Analogies exist and are human nature. But the privileging of sexual symbols does obscure some of Cather's art and meanings.

She despised most of the writing women who were her contemporaries, with a rage akin to that of the George Eliot who wrote "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists". She reviewed Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* with disapproval, largely because it over-valued, as she considered most women writers did, romantic love and idealized sexuality.

They insist upon making it [the passion of Love] stand for all the emotional pleasures of life and art, expecting an individual and self-limited passion to yield infinite variety, pleasure and distraction, to contribute to their lives what the arts and the pleasurable exercise of the intellect give to less limited and less intense idealists. So this passion when set up against Shakespeare, Balzac, Wagner, Raphael, fails them.

This seems to me to be a genuine example of the artist's awareness that there is more to life than sexuality rather than the lesbian's sense that her vision of the sexual world is secret, precluded or unspeakable. O'Brien makes much of the phrase used at Oscar Wilde's trial, "the love that dared not speak its name", which she associates with Cather's description, in her famous essay of 1922, "The Novel Demeuble", of a desired art which shall create

whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there. . . . It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone defined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed.

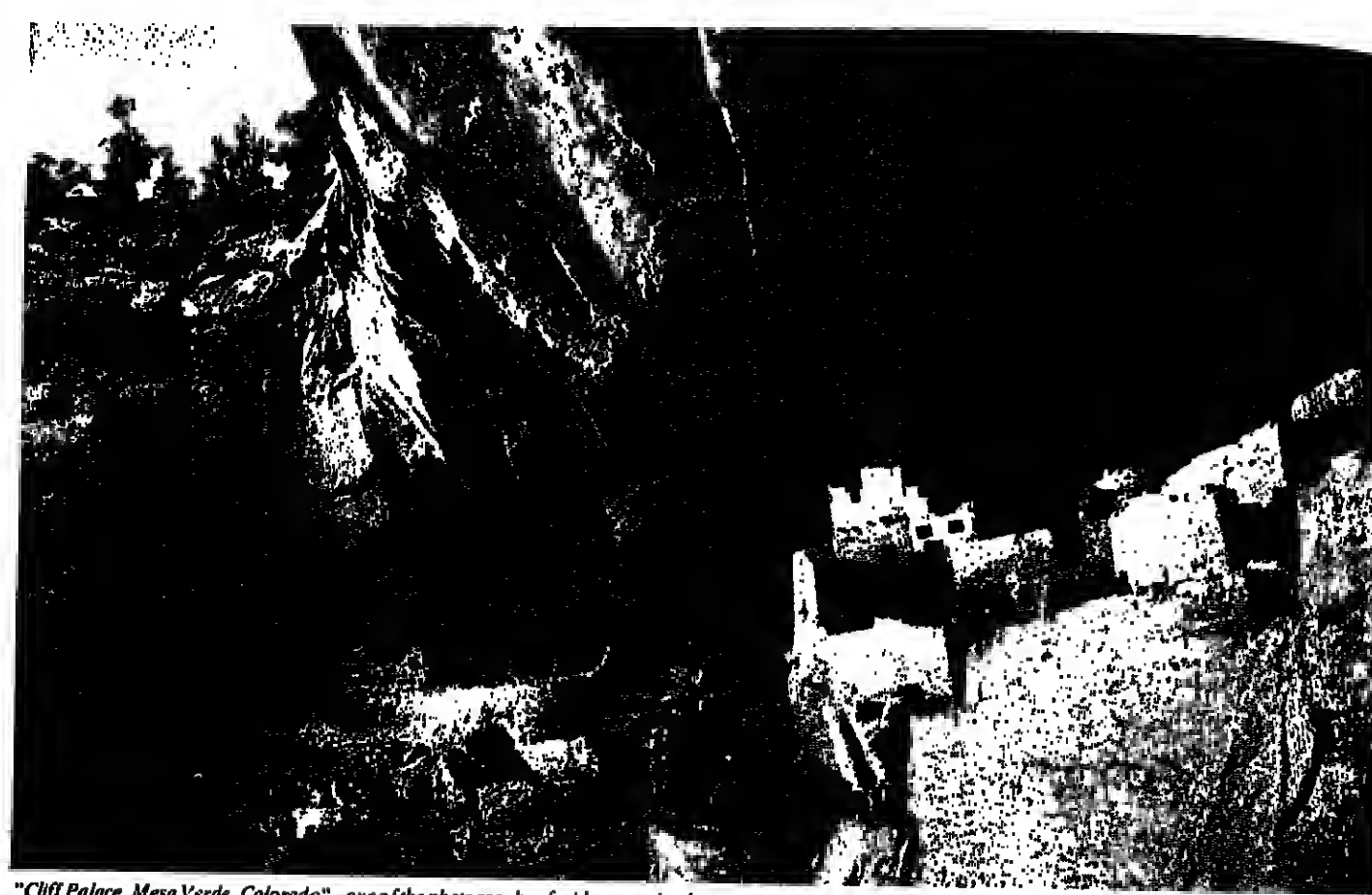
This, says O'Brien, is not only "the modernist writer endorsing allusive, suggestive art" but the "lesbian writer forced to conceal or disguise the unnameable emotional source of her fiction".

It is possible that Cather's indignant and extravagant published contempt for Wilde's moral "evil" and "baseness" were a smoke-screen for anxiety, though her distaste reads forthrightly enough. She certainly also condemned him for "crimes against literature" and "the begetter of all evil - insincerity". "The sins of the body are very small compared to that," she added, returning to her major preoccupation with art, death and the truth.

Susan J. Rosowski in *The Voyage Perilous* associates Cather's praise for the indefinite, the undefinable, much more straightforwardly with late Romantic art. For her, Cather's aesthetic derives through James from the English Romantics, with hints of American Transcendentalism and Goethe, and references also to French Romanticism. If O'Brien is invigorated and constrained by feminist theory, Rosowski is somewhat impeded by a desire to define romanticism and fit Cather to it. In a discussion of *My Mortal Enemy* she quotes Cather's description of Myra Hanshaw's reaction to Modjeska's singing of "Casta Diva":

mysteriously related to something in her nature that she rarely saw, but nearly always felt; a compelling, passionate, overmastering something for which I had no name, but which was audible, visible in the air that night as she sat crouching in the shadow.

Rosowski concludes with calm certainty: "This is valid romanticism." O'Brien might have concluded with equal certainty that it was lesbian sexuality. Rosowski shows a tendency to hypostatize and reify romanticism, so that it becomes not at all vague and indefinite, but a measure of thought and expression which Cather is holding up before herself. But who she relaxes the bonds of her thesis she is a good



"Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde, Colorado" - one of the photographs of midwestern landscapes in Willa Cather: A pictorial memoir (publication details on page 306).

and perceptive critic. She compares the pattern of vision of *My Antonia* to "Tintern Abbey", Coleridge's conversation poems and Keats's Odes. "Like her predecessors in romanticism", she tells us portentously, "Cather uses that pattern to write of the individual imagination perceiving the world symbolically." But she goes on to say some very sharp things about the possessive nature of the male narrator's vision, its assumption of male transcendence, its treating of women as objects.

She is particularly good, in her discussion of *My Mortal Enemy*, about the ambiguity of the adjective, which means in this context, both dying and deadly. *My Mortal Enemy* is a novel about the limits of the myth of romantic love, told by a female narrator, who, like Cather, prefers teaching to journalism as a truthful base for art to grow out from. It is also, like all Cather's novels, a novel about mortality. Cather's novels are formally very different from each other, told at different speeds, from different distances, by different narrators. Yet they all seem, paradoxically, to be told at the same unbroken pace, which can be perceived as we perceive life, alternately galloping or crawling, from beginning to end.

Criticism used to look for "influences" and now seeks to place author and text in one theoretical framework or another. Either way, the critics are looking for similarities, rather

than the qualities which might be thought to make a work individual or even unique. Cather does have a powerful individual voice, not obtrusive or odd, but wholly unmistakable. The pictures she makes of the world and the cadences of her sentences are indeed unforgettable, and yet it is hard to say why they should be so. She was paradoxical. She wrote most precisely and definitely about the impression and indefiniteness of our apprehensions. She was intensely civilized and wrote about motions of life so blind and primitive that they are apprehended wordlessly, flaring or creeping in the blood and the earth. She wrote about the savagery of the frontier and she wrote about the quiet arrival of early civilizing influences - cookery, preserves, salad dressing. "And really a new society begins with the salad dressing more than with the destruction of Indian villages", she said of her re-creation of the fragile and tenacious French civilization in seventeenth-century Quebec, praising, as O'Brien rightly notes, the traditional female virtues. She saw herself as Virgil's heir in the formless plains of the New World, bringing art, naming. "Primus ago in patriam mecum . . . deducam Muas." But the art was an art of plainness: she adhered to the Flaubertian prescription pinned over Sarah Orne Jewett's desk: "Ecrire la vie ordinaire comme on écrit l'histoire." She used painterly analogies for her

work; the simple frozen gestures of the fresco of Puvion de Chavannes, or the cold grey sea with busy ships perceived through windows in Dutch interiors. She wrote increasingly about religion, but the religious impulse in her work is inextricable from that of the artist. "Art and religion (they are the same thing in the end of course) have given man the only happiness he has ever had", the Professor says in her most intricate novel, *The Professor's House*. His clearly and metaphorically connected to the desert visionaries and homeless crusaders of the "kingdom of art" essay, rejecting the domestic virtues for "death and the truth". Here is Willa Cather's final paradox; she celebrates the making of hearths in the wilderness, and yet she knows that these hearths vanish like the ancient Indian settlements, like the life of Alexandra Bergson's father in *O Pioneers!* who slides away between paragraphs, accepting his fate: "He knew the end too well to wish to begin again. He knew where it all went to, what it all became." The Professor sees absolute exhaustion, the loneliness of that last narrow house as "the Truth". Cather's early books give us visions of death in the midst of life; her later books give us memories of vitality in the grey world of death. The pace is hectic and steady, either way. She was the great poet of mortality, about which she told as much truth as she could.

Serious proposals to the ladies

Fidelis Morgan

RUTH PERRY

The Celebrated Mary Astell: An early English feminist. 549pp. Chicago University Press. £38.25 (paperback, £13.95). 0 226 66093 1

George Ballard, the eighteenth-century biographer, wrote of Mary Astell that

asth' from the very flower of her age, she lived and conversed with the Beau Monde, amidst all the jolly, pomp, and pageantry of the great city; yet she well knew how to resist and shun those insinuating smiles, and wisely guarded against all these temptations and evils; and in the midst of it, led a holy, pure and even angelical life.

In the twentieth century Astell has been adopted as a feminist trail-blazer. Indeed Ruth Perry subtitled *The Celebrated Mary Astell* "An early English feminist", and heads chapter four "England's First Feminist".

Despite the current (and dangerous) urge to label people of the past with names which can only truly apply to our own time, Ruth Perry argues that Mary Astell should be placed with, in these terms, while admitting that the "would have been horrified by the implied radicalism

of the label". Astell's pleas for women to raise themselves from the world of fashion, cards and tea-table tattle are pithy, and certainly have a modern ring: "How can you be content to be in the World like Tulips in a Garden," she cries, "to make a fine *show* and be good for nothing?" She had no time for the popularly accepted belief that men were naturally superior. "For if by the Natural Superiority of their Sex, they mean that every Man is by Nature superior to every Woman . . . the greatest Queen ought not to command but to obey her

Society demanded that a woman must pass from her father's financial protection to her husband's. As there were only seven men to every ten women, inevitably (even without counting the woman who, like Mary Astell, chose not to marry) 30 per cent of women were bound to lead a single life. In addressing this problem Mary Astell produced her most celebrated work: *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, in which she argues that gentlewomen, like herself, should remove themselves from the male world and retire to rather demure eighteenth-century versions of the YWCA. Unfortunately the more one reads of her proposals, especially when comparing them with, for instance, Dorothy More practical ideas for women, the less realistic they seem. To fact Mary Astell

appears to have been touched by the same pastoral idyll which inspired Lady Walsfort to suggest that she and the worldly Mrs Marwood should "retire to Desarts and Solitudes; and feed harmless Sheep by Groves and purring Streams . . . leave the World, and retire by ourselves and be Shepherdesses".

Ruth Perry describes Astell's origins, her works and their place within the literary and philosophic movements of her time, her day-to-day life in Chelsea and her friendship with her friends. Lady Catherine Jones, who eventually invited Mary Astell to move into her house in Jew's Row, and nursed her through breast cancer and a mastectomy; Ann Countess of Coventry, whose surprisingly catholic book collection is listed in an appendix; and Lady Elizabeth Hastings, who boasted that she had only once read a novel and had always regretted it. (This lady's luncheon menus and table maps also appear in the appendices, and feature such items as "Fridge soups, 1 more beef, 1 stude frute and brill cream.") The book is thoroughly researched, and Perry wanders off to amusing and original directions, including enough detail about the people and places surrounding Mary Astell to compensate for the fact that Astell herself was something of a poor bore.

Monarchy with a human face

R. T. Shannon

STANLEY WEINTRAUB
Victoria: Biography of a Queen
700pp. Unwin Hyman. £17.50.
0 047 20640 0

Stanley Weintraub is well known as an interpreter of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century English literary and cultural history. He has been taken on the most formidable job in his field. He knows how Lytton Strachey, being put the eminent Victorians in their places, was rather put in place himself when he came to tackle the eponymous Queen. This is a quite the case with Weintraub. He is an American with an American angle on things. He gives him a certain protective cover. His eye on the politics, and especially the international politics, of the reign is not strong. He makes indeed a dog's breakfast out of such things as Maynooth and the Congress of Berlin. There is no consistent reference apparatus. He depends candidly on the archival work put in by recent biographers, Elizabeth Longford in 1964 and Cecil Woodham-Smith in 1972. But the central thrust of his biographical approach is personal rather than political. His aim is to bring to life "a complex woman", a daughter, a virgin queen, a wife, mother and widow. The subtitle of the American edition is in fact "An intimate biography". Sources of new information in this dimension have lately become available ("we now know that she was not her father's first child, not even his first

Victoria"). He can cite "some unfamiliar names as well as incidents unrecorded in earlier biographies". He can offer corrections and emendations and has tidied up some obscure corners. He can offer, also, revised interpretations of the madical side of things.

All this is to the good. There is scope for the kind of personally intimate emphasis provided here, especially since an imputable motive - scandal-mongering and mischief - simply does not arise. Weintraub handles the "Empress Brown" theme - her particular relationship with her Highland gillie John Brown - with admirable judiciousness, giving it the full value the candid Queen herself would have insisted on. At the same time he makes it absolutely clear both how ingenuously innocent it was on the part of Brown as well as the Queen, and yet why it was that on Victoria's death her son and heir Albert Edward made short shrift of all memorials within his reach and her daughter and literary executrix Beatrice (Princess Henry of Battenberg) edited her papers vigorously before destroying the originals. All that she preserved are the extracts from Victoria's journals published in the (again, heavily edited) sets of volumes of her letters.

In a curious way, Weintraub's Americanness becomes in itself a kind of innocence which matches well that of the Queen. He is impatient, as a scholar, with heavy-handed *Ebenbürtigkeit* professionalism. He is often forced by the etiquette of English titles. One keeps stumbling over things such as "Lady Elizabeth Holland". The difference between Charlotte Princess of Wales and Princess Charlotte of

The Duke in mufti

Brian Fothergill

WILLE THOMPSON
Wellington after Waterloo
300pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £19.95.
0 047 20642 6

Wellington the politician, in legend and public imagination, pales before the image of Wellington the military hero. One obvious reason for this is that the nation was united behind his stories, whereas his political career was by its very nature partisan and therefore divisive. Viewing Wellington's *Despatches* a contemporary French critic complained that the word "duty" appeared on every page but not the word "glory" - a word which it would never have occurred to Wellington to use. The duty rather than the glory is the substance of Neville Thompson's study, and he sees Wellington's involvement in the political life of his country not as an aberration from his military career but as a logical extension of it: he was working to preserve the political and social foundation that his victories had secured. If reform had to come, and Wellington instinctively distrusted it as being the hallmark of the Whigs, he thought it better, as Thompson puts it, "for inevitable change to be carried out by a sound minority that would control and limit it than by one eager to push reform as far as possible".

With such a theory as the central pivot of his political thinking it is not surprising that Wellington considered the untrained Parliament as being "a Legislature which answered all the good purposes of legislation, and this to a greater degree than any Legislature ever had answered in any country whatever". What justified him, in 1832 was the thought that "lawyers, physicians and shopkeepers" would replace "gentlemen of local position" as Members of Parliament. It is a little difficult for us today to sense the chill wind of revolution in the campaign for parliamentary reform that so alarmed Wellington and his friends in the 1830s. But the more when it is recalled that the government which championed reform was headed by an earl, and the bill when it passed was piloted through the Commons by the younger son of a duke. But to Wellington it seemed that the country was on the very brink of disaster. "It may be relied upon that we shall have a revolution", he told his friend Lord Arundell: "I never doubted the inclination and disposition of the lower Orders of the People. I told you years ago that the people are not to be persuaded the Lords to let the bill

pass into law, just as previously, as Prime Minister, he had enacted Catholic emancipation despite his declared belief that the Catholic religion was unfavourable to civil government anywhere in Europe, and in the face of the furious opposition of the ultra Tories among his own parliamentary supporters. So, too, later on, he would be persuaded himself, after almost a lifetime favouring protection, to agree to measures that would result in the repeal of the Corn Laws. But this seeming contradiction, as Thompson is at pains to point out, sprang from the Duke's deeply held beliefs concerning what was politically practical. It was paralleled on the military side, when he was organizing possible army intervention against the Chartists, by his view that it was "bad policy to hem in a Mob, the force should be applied in one direction and as many avenues for escape left open as possible". Like any seasoned commander Wellington knew the strategic value of retreat as well as of advance. "To strive, to hold," Thompson writes, "but at last when the price of absolute preservation was too high, to yield, was Wellington's great contribution to the adjustments of his own day and his great legacy to posterity."

Neville Thompson has written a detailed and well-researched appraisal of Wellington's political career. His concern is primarily with domestic affairs in the tumultuous years following the Napoleonic wars. We have only a glimpse, for example, of the Congress of Verona, or of the Duke's policies as Foreign Secretary. Thompson begins with Wellington's return from his Paris embassy in 1818 "standing at the very top of his shining hour". It might have been an advantage to have discussed his part in the Congress of Vienna for it was there that he was able to give effective expression to his firm faith in the return of legitimacy. Wellington "with pride of authorship" as Thompson shows, considered the Vienna settlement the bulwark against revolution. Did he believe, in the long run, that his delaying tactics had succeeded? One remark at least suggests that he had reservations. "It is some consolation to us who are so near the end of our career", the dying hero told his old friend J. W. Croker, "that we shall be spared seeing the consummation of the ruin that is gathering about us."

John Cannon's *Aristocratic Century: The peerage of eighteenth-century England*, an expanded version of the author's *Willes Lectures*, has now been issued in paperback (193pp. Cambridge University Press. £8.95. 0 521 33566 3). The book was reviewed in the TLS of February 22, 1985.

Wales defeats him utterly. He has Panmure as "Minister for War". He is occasionally unguardedly premature, with "Disraeli as an ambitious young M.P." a little before he entered the Commons, and Bismarck as a chancellor a little before the birth of the Second Reich. And one is reminded that it was another American - a "London yankee" - Henry James, who had some of the most telling things to say about what the Queen came to stand for. Impressed by the numbed shock of the public response to her death in 1901, James commented to Oliver Wendell Holmes on the "strange and indescribable" sense of loss: "I mourn the safe and motherly old middle-class queen, who held the nation warm under the fold of her big, hideous Scotch-plaid shawl and whose duration had been so extraordinarily convenient and beneficent . . . a sustaining symbol." By contrast, James was depressed at the prospect of the coming into his own of the "arch-vulgarian" Prince of Wales. The "wretched little Yorks are less than nothing; the Queen's magnificent duration had held things magnificently - beneficently - together and prevented all sorts of accidents. Her death, in short, will let loose incalculable forces for possible ill. I'm very pessimistic."

This kind of specifically American appreciation (or over-appreciation) comes through in Weintraub's pages. There is nothing of Strachey's feline knowingness and nose for mischief. There is something here of the same impidity as *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*. And as he deals faithfully with Brown, so he does with Victoria's candid delight in sexuality, her rather morbid dislike of motherhood, her coolness to her children, her shamelessly low-brow tastes in literature and art, her foibles generally, especially her weakness for male beauty. Much the most interesting and revealing aspect of Victoria's personality presented here is her need for genuine human friendships outside her class

and her race. Her affection for John Brown and her Indian *Munshi* was far from whimsical - which of course made it all the more outrageous to her family and her court. By nature a decidedly self-willed, more than somewhat selfish person, Victoria was notably patient with servants. Her obstinate determination to spend as little time as possible in London or Windsor and as much time as possible in her personal houses at Osborne and Balmoral caused endless trouble and vexation to her ministers and her entourage.

What might be termed her larger faults Weintraub, again, attends to faithfully. Her lifelong sulk against life (and to a very great extent orthodox religion) after her great bereavement in 1861 naturally beads the list. Weintraub has excellent comments on her almost criminally negative attitude to Ireland and the Irish. He calculates usefully that in a reign of sixty-four years she spent five weeks in Ireland as against seven years in Scotland. Her distrust and underrating of her eldest son and her consequent obstinacy in blocking Gladstone's efforts to establish the Prince as a conciliatory presence in Ireland deserve - and get here - more than the usual cursory treatment.

Undoubtedly the biggest weakness in Weintraub's general handling of his subject is his unreason of touch with Prince Albert. He does not understand the inwardness of Albert's Ernestine Saxon dimension and the significance of the background influence of King Leopold of the Belgians and his sister, Victoria's mother (who, in other respects, gets a rather better press here than she has had heretofore). Albert and his aims and problems do not "add up" in Weintraub's reading of them. This is part of a wider unreason of touch with German matters (he presents Emperor Franz Joseph as possessing a "broad white beard", which is an almost perversely inadequate treatment of one of the most famous arrangements of whiskers in history).

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John Cannon's *Aristocratic Century*

The jaws of victory

Hew Strachan

TREVOR WILSON
The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918
864pp. Polity Press. £35.
07456 0093 X

Trevor Wilson writes fluently and vividly. By tackling controversies head on, and by being as willing to state the well known as the new, he manages to combine a clear narrative with strong argument. He states in his introduction to *The Myriad Faces of War* that his objective, at least in part, has been to transmit what he has learned "to readers who are not trained historians". Yet the price and length of his book in combination will ensure that it will - undeservedly - remain one written by an academic for other academics.

Furthermore, there will be professional historians who will temper their recognition of Wilson's industry and achievement with regret that their own cherished areas of interest are excluded. The most glaring omission is the lack of any discussion of the economic direction of the war. There is much on war industry and war production, but the first (and only) Budget to be mentioned is that of April 1918; Lloyd George bestrides the pages as Minister of Munitions and as Prime Minister, but not as Chancellor of the Exchequer. British finance figures as a consequence of the war, in relation to the country's post-war indebtedness, not as a feature of its conduct. The second, and arguably less grievous and more defensible, omission is that of war aims. They were, after all, one of the principal regulators of inter-allied diplomacy during the war, and of British strategy in the Middle East "side-shows" of 1917-18. But the debate which they engendered never became public, at least until 1918, and much of its content belonged in the realm of cloud-cuckoo land: hence, presumably, its absence here.

The strengths of *The Myriad Faces of War* are its treatment of political history, in which the author of the earlier *Downfall of the Liberal Party* gives a clear, concise and masterly summary of party and parliamentary developments; of social history, in a contribution which because it ranges beyond the purely demographic provides an admirable complement to J. M. Winter's *The Great War and the British People* (reviewed on this page); and in military and naval history, where Wilson's background as a political historian gives him insights that cut right across the cant of many who make their living by the practice of military history alone.

Particularly striking in this last regard is the discussion of casualties. The fact that the First World War was fought under the banner of a strategy of attrition has inevitably focused historians' attention on the interpretation of casualty statistics. In four pages, concluding his discussion of the Battle of the Somme, Wilson summarizes the imponderables of the problem, and points out that all is relative: the German army probably sustained fewer losses on the Somme than did the Allies, but its losses

Sink or swim

Peter Naylor

RICHARD HOUGH
The Longest Battle: The war at sea 1939-45
371pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0297 7893 X

The war at sea between 1939 and 1945 was unrelenting. In most of the campaigns that ranged over the world's oceans during these six years' toil and danger were regular, but never commonplace, experiences. Even when there were no set-piece combats between large forces, there was the continuous struggle to keep supplies flowing. Not only were the demands of the various battle-fronts enormous, but the needs of the population at home, for food, raw materials and the necessities of war-making, were never-ending. All of these tasks, as Richard Hough points out in his foreword, were performed in a setting that was - and indeed remains - hostile.

But it is on the struggle between men that

we are more serious when set in the context of available manpower and of the aggregate manpower resources of the Entente Powers. On Jutland he is comparably forthright. Naval historians have debated the inadequacies of British guns and fire-control systems, and of ship construction generally; they have also presented Beatty as the inheritor of the Nelsonic blind eye and Jellicoe as the paragon of caution and centralized command. Wilson breathes common sense into both these arguments. Capital ships in the Dreadnought era, whether British or German, were very difficult to sink, and it required prolonged combat for gunfire to have significant effect: design failings were secondary to this cardinal point. Second, Beatty, when himself in command of the Grand Fleet, and even before, proved as cautious as Jellicoe: both knew that Britain's greatest sea-power asset was the fleet in being, not a fleet rashly risked in intemperate actions.

But where Wilson's revisionism is at its most compelling is in his discussion of the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917. The strategy of 1917 has long been at issue in the debate concerning Lloyd George and Haig: for most historians the Prime Minister was reluctant to approve a British offensive in Flanders, preferring first Nivelle's attack on the Aisne and then the reinforcement of Italy. Wilson is struck by the fact that none the less Lloyd George did not stop the Ypres battle nor did he dismiss Haig: by 1917 there were, after all, plenty of generals - most obviously Putnam and Rawlinson - who would have fallen in with a proposal that the British army should confine itself to limited operations on the Western Front. Wilson therefore concludes that secretly Lloyd George admired Haig: they both shared a fondness for grand designs and big results, and perhaps the Prime Minister had begun to anticipate what the British army would achieve under Haig in the autumn of 1918. There are problems with this interpretation - they even give rise to some potential inconsistencies in Wilson's own position (on pages 440-1 Lloyd George is presented as powerless, given the direction of events, to influence strategy in 1917; elsewhere he is not) - but it does make more sense of Lloyd George's conduct, specifically over Third Ypres.

Wilson works hard to integrate individual experiences with the collective picture, even if the pursuit of the individual is often to the detriment of the synthetic: the soldier's experience of trench warfare is seen through the eyes of Frederic Manning, but the penalty for this is the neglect of themes (how long was a soldier in the front line? Why did he not mutiny? Or did he?) which are not germane to Manning's book, *The Middlemarch of Fortune*. However, there is an achievement here too. For *The Myriad Faces of War* is a work of compassion and of passion: the travails of the British people, and particularly of the working class, fill Wilson with regret that post-war Britain did not become "a land fit for heroes". This does not mean that he concludes that their efforts were in vain. Defeat would have been more awful than victory; liberalism - even if not the Liberal Party - triumphed over militarism.

Hough concentrates. The purpose of his book, he says, is to present the sailor's view of the war, and to emphasize personal experiences. He has drawn from a wide range of personal reminiscences, published and unpublished, and although his accounts of campaigns and battles follow a fairly standard pattern, to provide a framework, the details provided by these personal perspectives add depth and colour. They remind us that what we now know to have been the outcome of a particular encounter was often uncertain at the time, and to have depended on technical proficiency, dedication and sometimes chance. This was the case with the Battle of Midway, for example; and with the anti-submarine campaigns in the Atlantic.

The book is well written and attractively presented, but some parts of it are more striking than others. Hough is right to emphasize that while the ULTRA operation, which enabled the British to read German codes, was of great importance, the Germans were also able to read British naval codes up until early 1943, and this was of great importance to Donitz. He

Conflict and consensus

Patrick Renshaw

J. M. WINTER
The Great War and the British People
360pp. Macmillan. £25 (paperback, £7.95).
0333 265823
HAROLD L. SMITH (Editor)
War and Social Change: British society in the Second World War
271pp. Manchester University Press. £30.
07190 17777

War as catalyst for social change is a familiar thesis. First applied to the Second World War by Richard Titmuss, it was extended to cover the Great War and argued cogently by Arthur Marwick. The thirty-year rule, use of archive film in recent television series about war and the home front, and the sweeping attack on the Welfare State by government in the past decade have given old arguments about the emergence of the post-war consensus greater topicality.

The Great War and the British People and *War and Social Change: British society in the Second World War* subject the old arguments to searching reassessment. J. M. Winter's important and readable study of the effects of the 1914-18 war on the British people is largely demographic. Backed by graphs and tables of statistical information, it argues that the Great War reveals a great paradox: the conflict which killed or injured so many created conditions at home which raised the standard of living and improved health and life-expectancy.

The first section deals with the fighting front. Here one of Winter's most fascinating findings is that there are no reliable figures for the number of military casualties. The explanation, he argues, is revealingly British: a mixture of secrecy, lack of interest and loss of the relevant documents. There is also the odd policy laid down by the registrars-general, seen in the census of 1921: men who died abroad were treated as permanent emigrants who, for census purposes, had ceased to be part of the population when they left the country.

Faced with imperfect data, Winter applies "counterfactual" reasoning in his attempt to supply a figure for military deaths. This method, which involves working backwards from a "hypothetical peace estimate" of male mortality, is fraught with difficulty, but Winter at least demonstrates that government figures may be drastically at fault: he suggests that there were 722,785 military deaths in contrast to the official total of 548,749. Using other sources, he also establishes that the higher up the social scale a man was, the greater his chances of becoming a casualty of war.

Winter admits that the counterfactual approach may be vitiated by the decline in death-rates among the insured population brought about by improved civilian health in wartime. This is an important qualification; indeed, it is the focus of the entire second section of the book. Increased life-expectancy, he concludes, can be explained by an unplanned but substantial rise in the standard of living, especially among the poorest segment of the population, for whom rising real wages meant that while aggregate food supply declined during war, nutritional levels rose. If German workers in 1917-18 had enjoyed the real incomes and the nutritional and health standards of their British counterparts, Winter concludes, the result of the war could well have been reversed.

The contention that as a consequence of war Britain became a healthier place in which to live is further examined in *War and Social Change*. The focus of the collection, which includes an essay by Winter, is wider than that of Winter's book. How far did Hitler's war stimulate the growth of the Welfare State and the post-war "Attlee consensus"? The answer seems to be that its role has probably been exaggerated. All of the essays, which are carefully commissioned, are good and some of them are very good. Starting with John Macmillan on the effects of evacuation, we have, among others, Daniel Fox on the Health Service, Deborah Thom on the 1944 Education Act, Henry Felling on the war and the Labour Party, Penny Summerfield on the "levelling of class", and the editor, Harold L. Smith (who also provides a deft introduction), on the war and women.

This last essay argues that, far from liberating women into the male-dominated world of work, the war actually created a desire for marriage and family life, a conclusion supported by Winter's figures on nuptiality and fertility rates. The theme of many of the other essays is stated most clearly by John Stevenson: the ideas which constituted the "New Deal at Dunkirk" were in fact developing throughout the 1920s and 30s. In this context, two of the most interesting essays are by Rory MacLeod, on full employment, and by José Harris, on political ideas and the debate on the Welfare State.

Full employment was one of the fundamental assumptions on which Beveridge based his welfare proposals, yet, as MacLeod argues, there is no knowing whether measures designed to prevent a depression would have solved the problems of the post-war years, which were not (as most feared) a return to pre-war conditions but inflation and recurring balance of payments crises. How remarkable, he concludes, that economic policy should have paid lip-service for so long to an untested hypothesis. But equally remarkable was the fact that when the full-employment promise was tested between 1974 and 1976 the Keynesian consensus should have been abandoned so rapidly.

Here, Harris's concluding essay throws some revealing light. Her thesis is that the wartime consensus about the role of the State had been created by conditions which did not survive into peacetime. Consequently, the Welfare State was born without a coherent supporting theory of the State or a properly defined notion of welfare. Thus eventually it was vulnerable to attacks by its opponents. Harris's case is not fully made out, however: the collapse of the Keynesian consensus in the mid-1970s owed much besides to the IMF, to the weakness of the Labour Government, and to the fashionable ideas of Milton Friedman and the support lent to them by influential journalists like Peter Jay and Samuel Brittan.

Harris's eloquent attack on the idea of an emerging wartime consensus is implicit in all these essays. But although *War and Social Change* is a valuable contribution to the debate, I must confess to being a bit reactionary on its main topic. The war surely did create a sense of solidarity, a belief (in Harold Laski's words) that "the way to victory lies in producing the conviction now among the masses that there are to be no more distressed areas, no more vast armies of the unemployed, no more slums; no vast denial of genuine equality of opportunity". Keynes's little room in the Treasury, the "deal" he did to limit the financial implications of the Beveridge Report, had a profound and lasting effect. The crux, as Paul Addison has shown, was the reform of the Budget in 1941, when it first became the key regulator of the economy. Moreover, it is not enough to argue, as Stevenson and others do, that the ideas had been around for a long time. The crucial thing was their implementation in the war and post-war years.

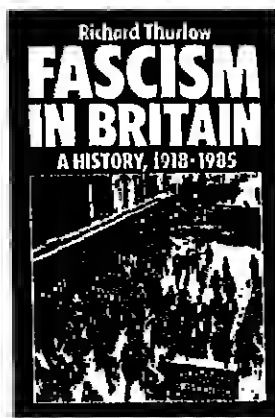
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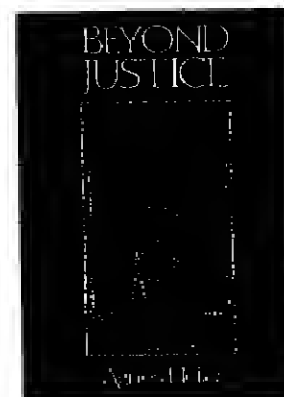
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 192pp. Century Hutchinson. Paperback, £3.95.
 0091706114

Jimmy Burns was the *Financial Times* correspondent in Buenos Aires during the Falklands war and for three years after that, and his *The Land That Lost Its Heroes* is a substantial and timely update on Argentine affairs. Occasionally, though, it is marred by some lasty excursions into academic speculation that are neither complete nor accurate. As in nearly all British works on the subject – the writings of Peter Beck are the only exception – the history of the Falklands dispute is both brief and careless: "I have avoided consciously a profound discussion of the rights and wrongs of Argentina's claims to the islands", Burns writes, but he has also avoided anything profound on the run-up to the war. Anyone interested in the more recent diplomatic prologue would be better advised to listen to Michel Charlton's current Radio 3 series, which promises to be the first serious analysis of the subject.

The Land That Lost Its Heroes is none the less a most readable and forthright account of recent Argentine history, written with sympathy and enthusiasm, and its judgments are frequently stimulating. Arriving in Argentina on the eve of the Falklands invasion, Burns perhaps underestimates how exhausted that political situation was prior to the 1976 coup and how fed up most Argentines were with the disorder and violence of the second Perón era. That contributed to their tolerance of the different brand of chaos that followed. Burns shows how Galtieri was overwhelmed by the popular

reaction to the Falklands invasion and forced to abandon the original plan to withdraw the main force and to leave on the islands only a token unit, here given as five hundred men. To have done that would have required a sensitivity towards the islanders, an awareness of diplomatic consequences and a strong chain of command, all of which the junta lacked. Five hundred men is also on the large side for a token. But what would the British have done if, after removing the fifty Royal Marines and Sir Rex Hunt to Montevideo, the Argentines had left on the islands a discreet force of equal size? Sent the Task Force? Sent a smaller force? Negotiated? Given that a fleet the size of the Task Force would have been ridiculous and anything smaller would have been vulnerable from the mainland Mrs Thatcher would have had to negotiate.

Perhaps because Burns went to Argentina from Spain he tends to compare the Spanish transition to democracy with Argentina's, to the latter's disadvantage, writing rather as if Spain had leapt on Franco's death straight into the arms of Felipe González, and forgetting that Argentina's military and economic problems were far worse. He does not see that perhaps Alfonsín's methods were right; his decision not to impose a domestic economic plan immediately on assuming office, preferring to delay until it was obvious to all that something radical had to be done, worked well for him. On these matters the criticisms in the book look a little too easy, and it was not the case as the Argentine army was characterized by "social elitism", and to refer to Perón's military career as short. He is too fond of referring to Argentine society as "regimented", which is neither a precise nor even an accurate description, and he relies too much on the nebulous notion of political culture: "Argentine authoritarianism cannot simply be described as a form of government; it is also a collective state of mind which is at the heart of the nation's political

culture." What exactly does that mean, and how does it square with last month's events?

There are some other faults which do not derive from too much and too little reading. Brazil and Chile are said to have shown "duplicité" during the war, the former for selling corned beef to Argentina's erstwhile customers and the latter for helping the British. Given the threat to Chile posed by Galtieri's Argentina, it is hard to see anything very duplicitous there, and it is a pity that the book does not follow up what Chilean intelligence told the British in the months preceding the war, a subject strangely avoided by the Franks Report though that enquiry does find space for less relevant cocktail rumours in Montevideo. The author also implies that left-wing Argentines abroad in exile spoke out against the war. Some did; some even rejoiced at the prospect of the Argentine army getting a briefing, forgetting that it was conscripts and soldiers and sailors who were involved rather than members of *juntas*. But a number did not. Burns is also rather free with his advice on what should be taught in Argentine schools, and is a bit surprised that the Malvinas part of the curriculum remains unchanged. He cannot stop himself from time to time referring to Argentine events as "opera" or "operetta". As far as I know, no opera or comic opera, unless one counts the deplorable *Evita*, has been written about Argentina; it is also hard to see what is operative about President Alfonsín's visits to military barracks in 1985 or about a Peronist demonstration in Congress, both of which here qualify for the adjective. Lord Wyatt's installation in the House of Lords, say, was a deal more operative than either. The book does all the same succeed in conveying a detailed sense of "the highly-charged political drama of contemporary Argentina". There is a useful chapter on the arts, and a severely critical review of the record of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

The Falklands Play turns out to contain two dramas, one about Thatcher, Galtieri, Haig, Carrington, Nott, Dozo (*sic*), Costa-Mendez (*sic*) and the war, and the other in the prologue about its author Ian Curtis, and the directors of the BBC, and the decision not to go ahead and produce Curtis's play. These less familiar events include a telling scene in Lord Reith's old office.

Putting a price on poison

Stephen Mills

PETER H. SCHUCK
Agent Orange on Trial
 347pp. Harvard University Press. £21.25.
 0674010256

In December 1978, a young Vietnam war veteran named Paul Reutershan, deeply in debt for medical expenses, died in a New York hospital from stomach cancer. He left behind him the seeds of the most complicated personal injury lawsuit in legal history. It was a case that would eventually involve 2.4 million Americans – employing 1,500 law firms during six years of litigation – and result in the largest Tort settlement ever known.

Reutershan had been a clean-living man. He neither smoked nor drank. He was keen on physical fitness and he thought he had come through the Vietnam war relatively unscathed – until the inexplicable cancer was diagnosed.

He spent the last months of his life working from a room in his mother's house, trying to contact other Vietnam veterans: men with cancers, men with racking skin complaints, men whose babies were born deformed. The link between them all was Agent Orange. At some stage in their service they had all used it or been doused with it. Agent Orange was the chemical defoliant sprayed with notorious liberality on the forests of Vietnam in the late 1960s to rob the communists of their cover. It was a combination, in equal parts, of two potent herbicides: 2,4-D, and 2,4,5-T. Both are nasty compounds of carbon, hydrogen, chlorine and oxygen, both are still in use outside the United States, 2,4,5-T in Britain, and both contain dioxin. Dioxin, as most people now know, and as some of it seems, is one of the most

toxic of all substances.

On his deathbed, Reutershan pledged a small group of people, his mother, his sister and a handful of veterans, to the task of exacting from the chemical industry some compensation for other victims of Agent Orange. A number of companies, including Dow Chemicals and Monsanto, had sold the herbicide to the United States government, and together they were to spend more than \$100 million trying to fend off the veterans' claims. *Agent Orange on Trial* is an analysis of how they spent their money, but it is not a simple courtroom drama. Although Peter Schuck tells a compelling story with authority, and although he touches on emotive aspects such as the characters and crises of the plaintiffs and the failure of their own Veterans' Association to help them, he is chiefly concerned with significant technicalities.

He is interested in the decision by the plaintiffs' lawyers to conduct the case as a Class Action, amalgamating at least 600 separate suits and including suits not yet in existence, a decision which has affected the more recent treatment of actions filed after the Bhopal disaster. He concentrates, too, on the way the basic law of Tort was forced to cope with a case in which cause and effect were so open to doubt. Most of all, he is exercised by the case's peculiar outcome.

On the very morning that the case was due to be brought before a jury, the judge, Judge Jack B. Weinstein, announced to a bewildered public that an out-of-court settlement had been reached. A fund of \$180 million was to be set up immediately, with interest accruing until it could be distributed to acceptable claimants. On the one hand, this was the biggest sum of money ever paid out in such a case. On the other hand, it was far below what the chemical companies had expected, and been secretly

willing, to pay and the court plan for distributing the money excluded issues such as birth defects. In any case, none of the cash has yet been disbursed, except of course to the lawyers, one of whom was awarded \$750,000 for a few months' work helping the judge to fashion the settlement details.

Peter Schuck has a plausible explanation for what happened, something more subtle than corruption or behind-the-scenes government pressure. Just as the scientists, in developing ever more complex chemical compounds, have failed to predict the appearance of minute but lethal bi-products like dioxin, so too the intricacies of resulting court cases are too multifarious for traditional solutions. According to Schuck, in the District Court an average case is recorded on a two-page docket sheet listing perhaps sixty filed documents. The District Agent Orange docket sheet covered 425 pages, containing 7,300 entries, boused in their own office staffed by two special clerks. Apparently Judge Weinstein simply cut through the ramifications and railroaded a decision, having at the critical moment the simple advantage of his greater resources of energy than the tired veterans' lawyers.

Schuck makes another interesting point: that whether or not the settlement was just, the aggrieved veterans were denied their chance of a hearing in front of twelve fellow citizens. Not that they wanted publicity; they wished to tell their own stories, for it is an affirmation of individuality to do so. This reminds us that the law is not merely a matter of manufacturing judgments. It also involves catharsis.

Agent Orange on Trial provides a scholarly assertion of the need to ensure that, as our governments pursue technology and as we the public encourage them to do so, the law must evolve, innovative protections for the individual.



The Argentine press's view of Mrs Thatcher, taken from *The Land that Lost Its Heroes* reviewed here.

"Yes", he replied, "there was a fireplace there." He tapped a panel with his foot. "A man used to bring up the coals." "Does Reith haunt the place?" I asked. There was a pause; his back was to me as he replenished his drink. He eventually replied, tersely, with what seemed to me a wry sadness, "He used to."

There is some brisk characterization – "Behind a façade of courtesy, the cool calculations of ambition are not difficult to perceive"; "Bill Cotton has no professional experience whatever that I am aware of, of writing, producing or directing a serious play." Curtis contends that the BBC asked for politically loaded changes and failed to give a convincing explanation for the decision to cancel the play. A close reading of the script might lead one to conclude that, for reasons of taste as well as of timing, it was cancelled on pressure from Conservative Central Office.

Alt rise, chatting, and start putting their fold-downs away in their boxes. WHITELAW (cheerfully): Argentina, where the nuts come from. CARRINGTON (grinning): No, no, that's Brazil. WHITELAW: Is it? It's all Comic Opera Land, anyhow. Do you know, they haven't fought anyone for over a hundred years, except each other. CARRINGTON laughs.

Proofs

Don't tanguish over commas, or colons, or semi-colons, or dashes; all that punctuation you so scrupulously specify will miscarry, thanks to some proof-reader's inattentiveness; the rhythm of your words, your sentences, will prove less important than you expected, or less so than perhaps you aspired to. It was nothing but wishful thinking – you won't be rend to the music of language, but against the hurly-burly of events.

Medicine

Again I've seen a genuine lemon. Ania brought it back for me from France. She thought: return, or else stay on? And what good reason holds her here – A face or two, some words, and this anxiety? The lemon was yellow, and looked bona fide. No need to display it in the window so it could find itself, like a pale tomato or, ripening and yellowing year by year, as we ourselves grow into ourselves. No, it was fully itself already when she bought it, not so much yellow as gold, and slightly gnarled. I accepted it gratefully.

I'd like to put on the thick skin of the world, I'd like to be as stringent but on the whole tasty – a child swallows me unwittingly, and I help its cold.

Escape to happiness

Gerald Abraham

ANDRZEJ PANUFNIK
Composing Myself
 389pp. Methuen. £17.50.
 0412588807

Hilbert Wsgner has been considered the outstanding case of a composer forced for political reasons to live abroad; but his exile was short by comparison with Panufnik's and ended with his victorious return to his homeland, whereas Panufnik's has been permanent. He has transformed himself from a very Polish Pole into a complete (though rather unusual) Englishman. But capacity for drastic change was in his blood; his engineer father was "a specialist in hydro-technology, whose real passion was the construction of violins". He himself was admitted to the Warsaw Conservatoire at the age of seventeen, "ostensibly to study percussion, but with permission to sit in on classes of music theory, music history and the reading of scores", and was allowed to join the student orchestra, abandoning percussion lessons for harmony, counterpoint and composition. Later came study with Weingartner in Vienna, visits to Paris and, in March 1939, London, which provided "a serene epilogue" to his musical education. In less than six months he was back in a Poland invaded by Germany and bombed and burned Warsaw he managed to compose a "tragic Overture" reflecting the horrors that surrounded him and to conduct it during the German occupation; he later found that the Overture and all his other manuscripts had been burned by a stupid occupant of his former mistress's flat.

He was appointed conductor of the Kraków Philharmonic Orchestra in 1920, then transferred in 1946 to the Warsaw Philharmonic, which he had to rebuild from nothing, and was later to visit Paris to buy French scores and orchestral material. Now he went to London to conduct his *Five Polish Peasant Songs* at an

as a conductor. However, the International Conference in Pmgue (in May, not June) 1948 was not quite as Panufnik describes it; in private neither Yarusovsky nor Shporin "danced in unison" with Khrennikov – and Yarusovsky, whom I later got to know fairly intimately, was by no means a tame follower of the Party line. The next ISCM Festival was in Palermo, where Szymanowski's *Król Roger* was to be performed, though Panufnik missed it owing to a chapter of accidents. Instead, he found himself trapped into making a quasi-political speech dwelling on "the humanitarian aspirations of the composers" represented at the Festival. Back in Poland, he successfully evaded an invitation to a conference on "the future direction of music" – which was just as well, seeing that his orchestral *Nocturne* was condemned as "unsuitable for the broad mass" since it did not express "joyful life under socialism". Even Chopin was conscripted into the service of the cause.

At a Warsaw exhibition commemorating the centenary of Chopin's death, the largest portrait, dominating the whole area, was not that of Chopin but of Karl Marx, whose colossal enlarged features dwarfed the interesting documents, manuscripts and photographs illuminating the composer's life.

Having asked what Marx had to do with Chopin, Panufnik was told, "Oh, a very great deal. The portrait shows us the epoch in which Chopin lived!"

In this stifling atmosphere Panufnik found it impossible to compose seriously. In early 1949 he wrote some film music, then a suite on old Polish music, and in 1951 a *Symphony of Peace*. But his own peace was shattered by the advent of a young but thrice-married Irish girl and he quickly became her fourth husband; he had a daughter by her, but when he made a dramatic escape to England three years later and after a time was appointed director of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, she refused to join him in a "dull provincial Midland city" and they separated. Eventually he found a lasting companion in Camilla Jessel, twenty-three years younger than himself, whom he married in 1963. In the same year he composed his Third Symphony, *Sinfonia Sacra*, and since

then six more – all but one dedicated to her.

They are strange works, based on three-note cells. In No 5, *Sinfonia di Sfere*, he "attempted to create a large-scale musical structure permeated by a sense of geometrical pattern and order... a framework of spheres". Of No 7, *Metastasis*, he says that "in my imagination I was using a double helix as a ground plan, the first half of the symphony moving spirally towards the centre, the second concentrically and symmetrically working its way outward again". In 1983, between the Eighth and Ninth Symphonies, Panufnik composed a large-scale

work for twelve strings, *Arbor Cosmica*, which brought him "great happiness and contentment" during the many months he was "absorbed in its composition".

I used my own language based on cells, emerging from the ootes C-D-E flat, which I imagined as the roots of the tree, out of which I caused to grow a further chain of cells... which constituted the musical trunk of the tree, holding in unity and nourishing each of the twelve movements which I conceived as twelve branches.

I fear the comrades in Warsaw will not hurry to perform it.

Notes from prison

Henry Bail

JANUSZ ANDERMAN
Poland Under Black Light
 Translated by Nina Taylor and Andrew Short
 131pp. Readers International. £7.95
 (paperback, £3.95).
 093052313X

An abiding, if understated, theme of Janusz Anderman's *Poland Under Black Light* is the difficulty of writing about the unprecedented national trauma of martial law. The book's formal qualities – its frequent changes of viewpoint, its elusive chronology, and its unwillingness to identify its own protagonists – embody this sense of unease. It is neither a novel nor a collection of short stories; what is said early on of the victimized Poles, that "their world has the short life of film clips, notes lost on scattered cards", could equally apply to the work itself.

The fragments of narrative or "freeze-frames" present with economy and often bitterness various vignettes of experience under martial law. Other sections are more uncertainly focused. Several seem intent on portraying East European socialism as a world of moral and spiritual hollowness whether or not the government has actually declared a "state

of war" against its own citizens. The work acquires a greater confidence once its minor protagonist is arrested and sent to the internment camp at Bialoleka. The imagery of iron bars, of barbed wire and of prison barracks assumes its painfully familiar place in the representation of political life in the Eastern bloc. The most telling passage of all comes when the protagonist looks down at his fellow-inmates exercising in the prison-yard. By characterizing each of them he gives in less than two pages a demoralizing account of the governmental betrayal and Russian interference that have disfigured the history of post-war Poland.

There is very little sunlight in Anderman's book. One is struck by the almost total absence of a religious dimension. The Catholic influence on Polish life is by no means uncomplicated, but the degree of solace the Church has provided during the martial law years could hardly be overstated. Anderman's world seems nearly as atheist in its spirit as the authorities would wish it to be, and thus its comfortlessness is not wholly authentic. Just as sobering and provocative is his "Postscript – 1985", where it is the parties in opposition that, in a typical piece of Polish self-laceration, are subjected in hindsight to withering scrutiny. Given his own prison experience, Anderman has at least earned the right to such a demythologizing stance.

Just in case

Who was who in W8

J. Mordaunt Crook

HERMIONE HOBHOUSE (Editor)
Survey of London
Volume Forty-two: Southern Kensington:
Kensington Square to Earl's Court
502pp, plus 152 pages of black-and-white
photographs. Athlone/GLC. £55.
0485 482428

Reviewing the *Survey of London* is rather like circumnavigating the globe in a rowing-boat. Volume Forty-two alone – the fourth volume to be devoted to the Royal Borough of Kensington – runs to more than 500 pages of double-column text, with at least 3,000 footnotes and well over 600 line drawings and photographs. The index – which is omnivorous – includes the names of something like 425 individual architects or architectural firms and at least the same number of builders, artists and craftsmen. No corner of Southern Kensington is left unscored. From the "Old Court Suburb" around the Palace to the heddlers of Earl's Court; from Cornwall Gardens to St Mary Abbot's Hospital; from Barkers and Derry and Toms to St Cuthbert's, Phillibeech Gardens, and the Annenian Church of St Sarkis – the topographical machine grinds on.

Suppose one were to take an imaginary stroll, round about the year 1890. Who lives in all these houses – those brickly fortresses in Collingham Gardens and Harrington Gardens, for instance? The architectural style is mixed – Baltic eclecticism: echoes of Bruges, Ghent, Haarlem, Lübeck, Danzig and Amsterdam – and are the origins and occupations of the inhabitants. First of all, Collingham Gardens. At No 1 – "the House of the Seven Gables" – lives Edwin Tate of the well-known sugar firm. At No 2, William H. Chicheborough, an American Vaseline magnate. At No 5, the fourth Earl of Willoughby: his saloon boasts a model organ fitted with patent hydraulic engines. No 7 is the residence of the architect himself, Harold

Peto: its interior is crammed with bric-a-brac and *objets d'art* which testify to his enthusiasm for the Northern Renaissance. At No 8 is Captain G. E. A. Ross, FRCS, FGS, conducting experiments, no doubt, from his balcony "observatory". Frederick Fleischman lives at No 11; Leopold Hirsch at No 15. No 17 is occupied by F. G. Hilton Price, banker and collector.

Now for Harrington Gardens. No 48 (now 22) is the house of Edward Vaughan Morgan of the Morgan Crucible Co. No 18 (now 37) is the retreat of W. R. Cassels, a literary gentleman and sceptical theologian, with independent means deriving from the East India trade. Next door, at No 17 (now 35) is his friend A. D. Robertson, formerly of the Bombay civil service. At No 19 (now 39) resides the great W. S. Gilbert, grandly set up out of the profits of *Patience*. Next door at No 30 (now 41) is the Hon Henry John Coke, son of the first Earl of Leicester; and over at No 22 (now 45) is Charles McLaren, MP, later first Earl Aberconway.

What do all these people have in common? Friendship, possibly: quite a few are personally known to the architects, George and Peto. Romanticism, perhaps: style, after all, is the main. Money, certainly: the price range per house, in currency of the 1880s, is £11,000-£16,500. Harrington Gardens and Collingham Gardens are a monument not only to late Victorian capitalism but to its three-dimensional expression: stylistic *laissez-faire*.

Were one to continue further, and take a turn down Longridge Road, one would find its inhabitants – we are still in the 1880s – to be mostly of the professional sort: music teachers, private tutors, lecturers, clergymen, solicitors, barristers, civil servants, clerks, agents and army officers. Most of these households have only two or three servants apiece, as against perhaps half a dozen in Harrington Gardens. But here live Ellen Terry, actress; D. S. MacColl, art critic; Mervyn Macartney, architect; and Marie Corelli, novelist. This street is clear-



A detail from Theo Bergström's photograph "Embankment Gardens", reproduced from The Open Spaces of London by Alec Forshaw (1969). Allison and Busby. £19.95. 085031 662 6.

ly not so dull as it looks. Behind those sombre fronts of sad-coloured brick, with columned porticos and window-surrounds in gritty stucco, hearts beat quickly – or so Mr MacColl assures us. Every morning Miss Terry sets out for rehearsals. Her departure is itself a theatrical performance. "She appeared upon the steps like April morning", MacColl records,

lifting wide eloquent lips, hooded eyes and breathless face to the light. She raised and kissed two little tots who were to be known as Edith and Gordon Craig. She greeted the next-door neighbours, family of a Rabbinical scholar, who had promptly become slaves of her apparition, and stood ready on the pavement. Her cushions were brought out, placed and patted to the open carriage; herself installed; the air became tender and gay with wavings and blown kisses; the wheels revolved, and greyness descended once more on Longridge Road.

But the street's "climatic day" must have been the occasion of Mr Gladstone's visit to Marie Corelli. Poor Mrs Gladstone was left outside No 47 in her carriage "to enjoy the fresh air" for

There are architectural ghosts too. Baron Grant's long-vanished Kensington House (James Knowles Jr, 1873-6), for example: £300,000 worth of overblown Second Empire confectionery – Augustus Hare called it "pretentious and frightful mansion" – built for a shady financier named (before he was ensnared by Victor Emmanuel I) Albert Goldschmidt. When it was demolished in 1982, according to W. J. Lofie, "all good inhabitants of Kensington rejoiced". Parts of the marble staircase went to Madame Tussaud's; the iron railings to Sandown Park. Another substantial architectural ghost must surely be Batty's Hippodrome (1851), an ephemeral timber auditorium on the site of De Vere Gardens, designed by George Ledwall Taylor (an architect otherwise remembered solely for inventing the name Trafalgar Square); it specialized in races between female charioteers imported specially from Paris.

Other architectural sites are fast becoming ghosts, most famously that great Art Deco temple: Barkers, Derry and Toms, and Pontings. Several celebrated churches and chapels are (just) still there: the Kensington Chapel, Allen Street (Congregationalist Classic); St Jude's, Courtfield Gardens ("Transitional Evangelical Church of England"); and St Cuthbert's, Phillibeech Gardens, where "popish" ceremonies provoked a riot in 1898 (the Protestant agitator John Kensit was dragged from the church crying "Murder", "Latimer", "Ridley", "Hallelujah my wife" and "Hallelujah my hat").

Alas, nobody can really stroll with the *Survey of London*: that would necessitate a motorized lectern. But, having done one's homework beforehand, one will know where to look. T. G. Jackson's writing sea-monsters, poised to leap into Kensington Gardens from the top of the bay-window of No 2, Kensington Court (1833-4) – "the idea being taken from the spire of the Exchange at Copenhagen". Or Bainbridge Reynolds's sinuous metalwork (1897) at St Cuthbert's Phillibeech Gardens, a bravura performance in what Sir John Betjeman christened the "nouveau-Viking style". Or Maves and Davis's Armenian Church of St Sarkis, Iverna Court (1922-3), a replica of the bell-tower of the Church of St Nshan in the monastery of St Haghpat, Armenia. Discoveries and rediscoveries, they are all there – from the Italianate balconies of Hereford Square (John Blore, 1845-51) to the jazz-modern elevators (Walter Gilbert, 1933) of Kensington's fading superstore, Derry and Toms.

The *Survey of London* is hardly designed for continuous reading. In fact "survey" is far too gentle a description. This is a topographical encyclopaedia, publicly funded – centrally now, rather than locally – co-operatively researched and written, comprehensively illustrated and meticulously indexed. It leaves no message unmeasured, no cobble left unturned. What else is there to say? In the long run, a good deal. From these volumes art historians will draw out theories of style and plan; demographers will plot their graphs of density and distribution; biographers will plunder incident and anecdote; economists will compare lease lengths, tenancies and rates. All this will take time. Gradually, piece by piece, volume by volume, the mosaic of metropolitan history grows more coherent, less chaotic – thanks to the labours of London's remorseless cartographers.

In time of war

J. K. L. Walker

Penelope Lively
Moon Tiger
200pp, Deutsch. £9.95.
0430 9071
Maureen Duffy
Change
200pp, Methuen. £10.95.
0035640 X

Moon Tiger marks a new departure in Penelope Lively's fiction. She has taken a pair of scissors to conventional chronological narrative to present the life and times of her principal character, Claudia Hampton, in an impressionistic sequence of scenes linked by commentary and reflection on the processes of history. The method allows the cool analytic tone and the sense of the past which characterize Mrs Lively's earlier work to be brought overtly to the fore, and the modish disjunction and distancing are less plausibly by making Claudia a historian, who, as she lies dying in a hospital room, contemplates her life within the context of the age. But this, she reflects, will not be her history: "There is no chronology inside myself. I am composed of a myriad Claudias... everything happens at once"; yet, "the signals of my own past come from the received past".

From this subtle, if at times confusing presentation, characters and events central to the story gradually emerge. Three relationships stand out: those of Claudia with her brother Gordon, a successful academic economist, with whom she has been locked in intimate rivalry since childhood; with her lover Jasper, a courteous, half-Russian high-flyer; and with his dowdy, disappointing daughter Lisa. Gordon, first seen squabbling with his sister over automobiles on Charnmouth beach in 1920, is throughout Claudia's life "my sense of identity, my mirror, my critic, judge and ally". Both share a powerful maverick intelligence which links them in a shameless alliance against Gordon's pretty, Surrey-bred, "profoundly stupid" wife Sylvia.

Her intelligence, too, overlays Claudia's role as mother; observing Lisa become ordinary, she becomes bored with her and senses her disapproval but consoles herself by noting that "intelligence is always a disadvantage... It was an immense relief to observe that Lisa's was merely average." Lisa, too, is allowed her say throughout the novel, but the reflections centre on Claudia's lack of understanding, rather than on her selfishness and intellectual snobbery. We are left wondering whether Lively sees these aspects of her character; for all the multiple viewpoints in the novel, surprisingly little criticism of Claudia the protagonist is shared through by Claudia the controller.

The public events, too, against which Claudia claims to assess the significance of her life, are fewer than might be expected from the 1920s and 30s, the period of Claudia's youth; perfunctory references to Suez, Vietnam and the Bomb during the post-war era. There may be some deliberation here that reflects Claudia's public reputation as a writer of popular romantic history, the "Elinor Glyn of historical biography", as an unkind reviewer labels her. An exception is the central third of the novel, a vivid re-creation of Cairo and the Western Desert campaign in the early months of 1942. This period, Claudia sees, in retrospect, as the bore of her life, a time during which, as a press correspondent, she visits the battle area, where she meets and falls in love with Tom Southern, a young tank commander; later they spend idyllic leaves together in Cairo and Luxor, but he is killed soon afterwards, leaving her grief-stricken. Structurally, this wartime section is distinct from the rest of the novel. The events are not chronologically antedated and in the telling acquire a momentum lacking elsewhere. The author acknowledges that apart from the memoirs of the desert campaign, such as those of Keith Douglas and Cyril Clarke, together with her own childhood recollections of Cairo, and her descriptions of the city and of the dangers of the desert war have formed the basis of her writing. She is against formalism, and she is not alone in this. "Olive Miller," she writes, "thought that 'Olive Miller' was a bad name, and that 'Maudie' was a better one."

of burnt-out tanks strewn the desert "like a herd of grazing cattle" has a poetic force lacking in Lively's more mundane junkyard analogy for an identical scene.

A mundane reconstructionist, crassly reassembling the cunningly patterned fragments of *Moon Tiger* into a chronological sequence, might conclude that Claudia Hampton's life is not all that remarkable; that in fact it verges on the sentimental in its central emphasis, the enduring effects of a tragic wartime romance – for the novel ends with excerpts from Tom's campaign diary and Claudia's peaceful death. But even if the material of the novel is thus open to criticism, Penelope Lively's ingenuous, historically informed handling of it is a considerable achievement and Claudia Hampton herself a formidably reflective and articulate protagonist.

It is perhaps no more than a passing curiosity that another established woman novelist, Maureen Duffy, should also look to the Second World War for the subject-matter of her new novel, *Change*. There is certainly no sense in either novel of challenge to the received male vision of war: the female eyed turned, necessarily at second hand, on the battlefield, betrays neither outrage, nor patronage, nor a different basis of selectivity. It is a case of the dog that barked in the night. But why not? The close observation and compassion that characterize many of the classic war memoirs by participants are common to both sexes. Male addition to violence and glory seems to be speedily quashed in the conditions of twentieth-century mechanized warfare and certainly hasn't produced enduring literature; nor can it be supposed that those civilian Amazons, distributing white feathers during the Great War, would have reacted differently had they found themselves in the trenches.

In *Change* the controlling historical intelligence is that of Captain, later Brigadier, Harry Pearmain, excerpts from whose "unpublished memoirs" provide cool strategic and political analysis and pull together the largely dissociated vignettes which compose Mrs Duffy's panoramic novel. Here, the fragmentation serves a more traditional end; that of composing a general picture of the war and its effects on the people of Britain from the experiences of a representative sample of those engaged in it. The chronology, too, is straightforward: the novel's five sections carry the reader through recognizable blocks of time – the first year of the war, 1941, the Normandy invasion and so on – while within each section particular aspects of the fighting are revealed through the selected characters.

All this works well because of the skilled hand with which Duffy sketches in the lives and aspirations of her varied cast of characters and the realistic detail with which each section is haired – for example, the foul-mouthed chat over the intercom of the crew of a Halifax bomber on a night raid over Mannheim; or the culinary delicacies (hearts and stewed eels with parsley sauce) of a London family. The Londoners benefit, in addition, from the added warmth and understanding that Duffy brings to the astringent, dangers and social breakdowns that beset the average British family. The scenes of battle range widely from Norway, the fall of France; the St Nazaire raid, to the Western Desert, Singapore and an Arctic convoy. Change by the end comes to the protagonists – whether to Alan, poet and bomber pilot, or Karol the Polish naval officer, or Tilde the German-Jewish refugee, or to a black GI, free for the first time in damp East Anglia from the colour bar, or to the Land Girl Hilary discovering her true sexual orientation – through individual maturing in battle, family changes or, often enough, death by enemy action.

Despite its unashamedly formulaic structure, with more than an occasional whiff of *This Happy Breed*, *Change* succeeds in capturing the close-knit character of English wartime life. Duffy notes, among other things, the bloodthirstiness of civilians under bombardment during the Blitz compared with the relaxed, half-joking respect that the Eighth Army accorded Rommel. In a sense Londoners in 1940 and 41 were front-line troops without weapons; there was a lot of anger and excitement, as well as fear, about. Manned by survivors from Loos, the Somme and Passchendaele, London was a hot sector in those years.

Secrets, sooths and Sayers

Valentine Cunningham

RONALD FRAME
Sandmouth People
476pp, Bodley Head. £11.95.
0370 30778 X

The lust for description that fires *Sandmouth People* is huge. Here is a very busy mosaic, a vivid and extended tessellation of life in a southern English seaside resort named Sandmouth. It is some time in the 1950s. Everything is taking place on one day, April 23, that is St George's Day. Evidently in question, then, are England and the nature of Englishness in the immediate post-war period.

The novel's cast is as vast as its pretensions, and keeps growing. More and more fresh characters keep arriving on the page until the very end – not inappropriately, for *arrivisme*, social and geographical, is a chief characteristic of these towns on the pleasant but also challenging edges of England: places of resort and last resort, of destination and destiny, the ends you arrive at or are driven to for multitudes of the reasons novelists have always been interested in. No place, time, or crowd of inhabitants could possess more enticing ordinariness than those in Ronald Frame's novel. Bank clerks, actors (a group of whom is in town to put on a Rattigan play), schoolboys, a prep-school head and his pushy wife, a vicar, sundry parishioners, a lady novelist, hairdressers, golfers, shop assistants, shopkeepers, retirees, get-rich-quick johnnies, social climbers, snobs: all these mill about here in a kind of over-ripe readiness.

A careful sense of period is fostered as 1950s things and personnel are carefully accumulated. One particular town custom gloriously sums up the feel of the 50s in all their grisliness: the Miss Modern Personality Competition, in which young women are tested for their ability in ironing men's shirts, making cucumber sandwiches, rising graciously from a sitting position, and getting lumps out of gravy.

But there's more to Sandmouth than mere bric-a-brac and daily rounds. Sandmouth is also the place where, as in the Dover Auden celebrated, they understand the secrets of people's hearts, the real need, the underlying motive, the true story. *Sandmouth People* is dedicated to uncovering a set of undercover stories. The novel brusquely opens the closet on the local novelist, an actress, an actor, a bank clerk, exposing their covert lives as practising homosexuals. And the respectable covers so diligently blown are not just sexual ones; the novel's assumption is that there is nobody who hasn't something dubious to conceal. But under the clothes is the sexual key to everyone's private mythologies, the dirty root (to use the Auden phrase) of all pretensions and behaviour. "Everyone thinks about it. And if they don't it's submerged. Repressed. That

doesn't mean they're not thinking about it too. 'Goodness' is just frustrated sex." Thus Monica, a rough-trading lesbian who turns up at her old friend the lady novelist's rustic cot to reiterate what a number of other characters also declare; and the notion forms the basis of most of this novel's sordid home-truths. It's a reductive and cynical bit of pseudo-wisdom, too often declining into mere bitchiness.

Frame's keenness to expose, to engage in a moral archaeology that runs parallel to the archaeological dig also going on in the town, inevitably sponsors certain sorts of character and action: *Sandmouth People* comes packed with spies, scrutineers, weighers-up, social orbiters and registrars, and blackmailers. Of course there is a detective in town – possibly more than one. For Sandmouth has its own archetypal detective figure, a kind of seer, in the girl Tilly, the strangely silent and mentally disabled by-blow of the wealthy de Castellet family. Tilly is omnipresent, the onlooker and overhearer at every crime and misdemeanour, each irregular contact and doubtful utterance.

Tilly is also Tiresias, repository of all goings-on in this Eliotesque sexual wasteland; and, also, a holy idiot out of Faulkner or Steinbeck. In other words, Tilly is highly literary – which is the constant condition of the novel as a whole, now Eliotic, now seedily Graham Greeneish, now Proustian camp, now openly recalling *Middlemarch*. Frame's concentration on the events of just one day nudges ambitiously at Joyce's *Ulysses*. An epigraph from *Under Milk Wood* tugs at a comparison between Sandmouth and Llareggub. The anthology of Sandmouth types has a lot of Spoon River about it. And so on. Most overtly, though, Frame engineers a re-run of the classic detective story.

At the beginning and end of the novel a telephonist reads a detective story: the intertextual frame of all Frame's narrated events. Other characters read Agatha Christie or Margery Allingham. The local novelist is even, Sayers-like, named Miss Vane. Clearly, what is held out to us is this rather too earnestly meta-textual affair is the prospect of some significant comment on, or going beyond, the norms and suppositions of the sort of fiction that detective stories both consist of and represent.

The outcome of the teasing speculation is disappointing. Tilly, that most observed of all observers, becomes the eventual victim in what remains an unsolved murder case. This eventuality is not as routinely modernist as the detective becoming the murderer. But as a would-be novelty it packs scarcely any punch; and the lameness here is only part of an overall slightness in moral impact and formal means. For all its mass of occasional delights, for all its mass, *Sandmouth People* disappoints. Too content with mere coincidence, too uncritical of gothic sexuality, dumping dark sexual motivations on every doorstep; it remains a lumbering pantechonicon of a fiction csnsting about for some sustaining *raison d'être*.

The unreality device

Nigella Lawson

JONATHAN COE
The Accidental Woman
151pp, Duckworth. £9.95.
0713621572

Irony self-consciousness, a stylish weariness with traditional narrative technique and an authorial voice that is both knowing and irresponsible: these are all devices one might expect to find in a first novel by a clever Cambridge graduate born in 1961, but Jonathan Coe's book suffers from a surfeit of them.

The book concerns itself, in a desultory fashion, with Maria, the "accidental woman" of the title, whose life takes its unstructured, undetermined shape from the monstrous happenings of chance happenings and random events. No English graduate could claim to be breaking new ground here; but even so, the idea is expressed unhappily in the novel. Coe's way of depicting Maria's lack of engagement with her own existence is to create a person without any inner reality: the Maria-figure remains a device rather than a character.

The type of the narrating voice as it explains, in the end, the unreality of Maria's life, is a

or more usually exproseas its inability to explain, passages in the heroine's (and novel's) development is studiously *je m'en foute*; but there is a nervousness in these self-consciously facetious interpolations. Sentences such as "This advice stung Ronny to what we in the trade call the quick" or "Here you are to imagine a short scene of family jubilation, I'm buggered if I can describe one" provide examples of the anxious jocularity that pervades the book. This can descend to the simply camp – "Do you mind if we revert to the past tense?" asks Coe, "I find the others so exhausting" – or the pretentious: a footnote towards the end of the book confesses "I was conscious in this last passage that I could never achieve exactly my intended effect. Readers may therefore prefer to miss it out altogether, and to listen instead to the end of the first movement of Prokofiev's F minor violin sonata..."

But inside this experimental fiction is a straightforward narrative struggling to get out, and underneath all the fey would-be intellectualizing lies signs of genuine literary talent: in the shadowy (fugitively autobiographical?) character of Maria's brother; in Coe's comic sense, which hovers between satire and surrealism; and in his ear for dialogue. He should place his trust to those.

J.K.L. Walker

ROUTLEDGE

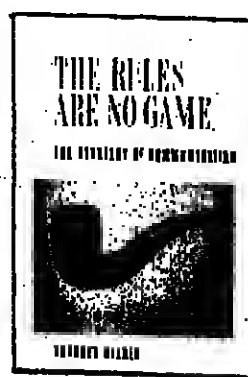
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Behind the lines

Lorna Sage

The Politics of Exile was the title of the crammed and curious two-day conference (April 25 to 26) organized by the Third World Foundation and *South* magazine (both London-based) at the Institute for Contemporary Arts. The real politicians had stayed away, offering a wide variety of excuses: they didn't feel like entering this kind of forum, it was too potentially compromising, they'd have to have the authority of a central committee. . . . Instead, it was the writers and intellectuals who jostled for space in the programme to talk about the Latin American, African, Middle-Eastern, and South Asian experiences. So the politics were filtered through very self-conscious lenses. The Paraguayan novelist Augusto Roa Bastos had set the tone in the January number of *Third World Quarterly*, describing the delusions of "freedom" exiles are prone to:

the belief that culture as such has been exiled with them. . . . creates a kind of faith, a sort of Manichaean oppositional masonic order that exchanges secret winks of complicity and recognition while publicly intoning its sad arias or triumphal anthems at international meetings and seminars.

In view of which, it was perhaps to be expected that he wouldn't turn up. The Somali novelist Nuruddin Farah, however, was very much present, and approached the same point from the other side, speaking in defiant praise of exile's alienation:

We Somalis are a loving lot, a physical people, talk a great deal. I thought coming into close proximity with more than one person at a time. And anyway, you couldn't plot the overthrow of a tyrannical regime from your mother's home. . . .

As someone else pointed out, exiles must always be distinguished from refugees, they don't have the collective innocence of victims. There was not a Tamil or an Eritrean in the audience; almost everyone was a member of an ex-governing or a would-be governing class. (Farah again: "I am here because they are in power there. If I was there, they would be here".) Educated and articulate exiles, said the banished South African poet Dennis Brutus (famed as the inspirer of the sporting boycott), form a new wandering tribe - the Bintu. They've been to conferences on the nature of exile just about everywhere, even Oklahoma.

Jokes are one good way of plotting a conference's course, and so is the distribution of territory and time. At the African session women's exile became an issue, and Buehi Emecheta observed that Lauretta Ngcobo and herself had been allowed only five minutes each, while the men on the panel took their time, and drew the moral that "until Africa is given back to women there will be no peace". And at the Middle-Eastern session the Turkish-Jewish writer Moris Farhi was ousted from the chair (on the grounds that he must be secretly a colonizing Zionist) to be replaced by calm Shirley Lim from Malaysia (via New York) who thus performed the timeless female part of peace maker. The Iranian writer Esmail Fassihi who still lives and works in Tehran ("I don't want to get into any argument with the government when I get back") tried to say nearly nothing, to ride, and was denounced from the floor for his pains, his very silence denied him. On the other hand the Yemeni poet Abdullah Al-Uhaili, notoriously self-effacing and shy, gave a speech of quite breathtaking bitterness and hilarity on the topic of the degeneration of the Arab culture into nationalism. He then vanished into the audience, leaving behind him a fulsome joke about the real motives of those who send young men off to the wars. A youth is conscripted on his wedding day and shipped to the front; some while later he returns wounded, a hero on a stretcher, and his three sons meet him at the port.

Rasul Bakshi, Pajjo from Pakistan also made jokes against holy warriors ("A Constitution? You mean to say there is some piece of paper that is superior to the will of God?") and championed scepticism and tolerance: "the people of Europe won the right not to speak on behalf of the Heavens".

Rather less grandly the editor of *South*, Anglo-Argentinian Andrew Graham-Yooll, suggested that London was an appropriate setting for this kind of thing because of habits of religious indifference. "The English aren't too

concerned about what individuals are so long as they can ignore them." This rather grey and friendly vision of the city outside the conference hall contrasted oddly with the lurid epithets applied to the imperialist Britain of the past. Even the language came close to being forgiven. Shirley Lim laughed at her schoolgirl self - learning Tennyson on Irish nuns, expecting the sun never to set on the English language - but at the same time confessed to dreaming of English as a "species language, a medium for trans-national, species communication". This utopian prospect melted away with the participants to all the corners of the world, and of Britain. Proceedings, though, will be published in the 1988 edition of *Third World Affairs*, which will be available from Third World Foundation, 13th Floor, New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4TS.

On this last day (Friday, May 15) of the fortnight's mammoth Poetry Live promotion, the survivors of the gallant 250 or so poets who storied out will be still on the circuit. This evening will find Edwin Morgan in Oxford (for example), Douglas Dunn in Manchester, Ivan Lalicin Bury St Edmunds and Adrian Henri in Milton Keynes. One reason why the idea (ama-



Fiona Pitt-Kethley at Waterloo Station during Poetry Live.

nating from Desmond Clarke, now a kind of tenth Muse who covers marketing) has been an undoubted success in terms of media coverage and free advertising, as well as a flurry of sales, is that it clearly strikes people as incongruous and unnatural enough to be newsworthy in itself. The notion of a poetry hype, a hard sell, the spectacle of gangs of poets addressing evening rush-hour commuters at Waterloo, is strangely suggestive. A loss-making national asset being turned round, perhaps? A confidence-trick nicely counterpointed with election promises? Certainly, an occasion for celebrating or bemoaning the way commercial mores infiltrate everything. The Waterloo engagements rapidly generated their own tabloid sex-and-violence stories. The police rang up the Poetry Society to ask them to stop Fiona Pitt-Kethley using bad language, and everyone was warned not to be "political or inflammatory". Benjamin Zephaniah, indeed (already famous for having the gall to be considered and turned down for an arts fellowship at Cambridge), was advised not to appear at all because of racist threats from the National Front. Lining up under the "LGBT PROPERTY" sign required grit. Also faith. It isn't easy to believe (says Blake Morrison) that "poets are suddenly sexy. You pose in front of trains and think of your publisher." By the end, Andrew Motion and Anthony Thwaite, felt at home enough to add in an unscheduled reading from Larkin. But it was Hugo Williams who supplied the most persuasive refrain for the occasion: the phrase that secretly punctuated everything was, he said, "MIND THE GAP".

There are lots of gaps: the gap between selling books and poetry, the gap between a promotion and a festival, the gap between performance and the page. Peter Jay of Anvil Press has

expressed distaste and doubt, only to be caught up (as a source of "controversy") in the publicity machine; and he has not helped his case by the tone he has adopted in a widely circulated "open letter" addressed to Michael Schmidt apropos of the celebratory number of *PV Review*:

The tall is wagging the dog now. To establish the commercial credibility of a poetry list . . . you have to indulge in some antics or some smart packaging . . . Well, why not . . . Everybody has to be something as well as a poetry-reader that we could appeal to. You and I, alas, are white, male and middle-class, and worse still we believe that poetry is an art. . . .

It is difficult to sympathize with this line, but none the less Jay has a point, though he has not located it. What unites him with another scornful commentator, Michael Horowitz, is the conviction that poetry needs to be needed, not merely sold. Even though Tuesday's Albert Hall event turns out to have been fairly respectfully attended this will not convince the sceptics that it has much in common with the euphoric happenings of 1965.

The Book Trust and the Poetry Society are doing their best to consolidate the market impact, with a pamphlet on *British and Irish Poetry* edited by John Medlin, which announces hopefully that "there is no sign of interest slackening, which means that a large readership for poetry has been established", and includes a list of 200 poets, plus advice from the Poetry Society's Pamela Clunes-Ross on how to treat your poet: "Poets have often travelled long distances for a reading and organizers should always find out in advance, directly from the poet, whether he or she would like a meal . . . and what he/she likes to drink." Further events associated with *Poetry Live* are readings by the Romanians Marin Sorescu and Nina Cassian (May 15) and John Ashbery (May 16) at the Second Royal Berkshire Poetry Festival, South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell. Entirely separate, though organized by the Poetry Society, is the mass (musical) reading, *Poets and Writers Against Apartheid* at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, London W6, on Sunday May 24. (Tickets £4 from Riverside Box Office, 01-748 3354.)

As the Arts Minister Richard Luce was welcoming another Constable ("Waterloo Bridge") acquired by the Tate and saved for the nation, Manchester City Art Galleries were relaunching a modest scheme called *Rutherford Picture Loans*, designed to get hundreds of works out of the gallery stores and into people's front rooms. The idea is a "Library" service (half-price - £8 a year - to Manchester ratepayers) and the hundreds of works in question (for instance, large edition prints by Matisse, Sutherland or Vanessa Bell, a collage by John Hoyland, a Samuel Prout, a great many nineteenth and twentieth-century watercolours) form part of the collection of Charles Rutherford of Bradford, another part of which is the foundation of their twentieth-century collection (thirteen Sickers, eight Augustus Johns, works by Paul Nash and Gweo John). There is, indeed, a cross-connection with Tate, since bluff-sounding Charles Rutherford changed his name from Rothenstein, and was the brother of Sir John Rothenstein, former Director of the Tate.

Otherwise, though, the set-up couldn't be more different. The Assistant Keeper Tim Wilcox points out that the Manchester idea (imported from Sheffield by the new Director Julian Spalding) is to dispel a certain odour of sanctity that hangs around works of art: "They're thought to be like medieval reliquaries containing the bones of saints - something emanates from them." Accessibility may even, they hope, have a knock-on effect: since borrowers will be able to take home new works (there's a purchasing fund) by local artists which they might well afford themselves. Still, the charge of the scheme - accentuated by its logo showing a cartoon character running off with a painting tucked under his arm - lies in the sense that it's a steal. (A special exhibition, *The Tukeway Picture Show*, is at the Athenaeum Gallery, Princess Street, Manchester, until May 17; the regular service will operate from the City Gallery, Mosley Street, Wednesday-Saturday 10am-6pm, Sundays 2-5pm.)

Letters

Change in the Soviet Union

Sir, - Archie Brown's reading of events in the Soviet Union as "political change" (March 27) is never demonstrated or elucidated (why "change", and in what respect?), nor does his enthusiasm for it carry conviction. It is difficult to join issue when no hard facts are adduced (unless of course the authority of *Pravda*, which happens to be peddling the phrase "political change", should make further enquiry redundant). It becomes clear, however, when he writes of the "measure of political pluralism, albeit still limited", in Czechoslovakia and Poland, that he is talking through his hat. The recent sentencing of the Jazz Section members in Prague (not in any way a political cell) to many months in prison with the compliments of the judge, instead of twenty-five years with contumely, or the introduction by the Polish press of the term "opposition" into its unrelenting campaign against the dissidents, once referred to exclusively as "enemies of the people" (a label evidently deemed too tiresome) - if these "changes" signal political pluralism, however limited, then of course Brown could be right. But it would make for vicious illusion, proving Brown's "detached perspective" a cloak for myopia.

As for Soviet affairs, he puts no trust in the political acumen of Russian émigrés: their scepticism stems from jealousy at having forfeited their role in events. Personally, I prefer their reasoned jealousy to Brown's unreasoning partisanship. But does he suppose that they ever had a role in the political life of the Soviet Union (apart, perhaps, from a supernumerary one, as inmates of labour camps), or that the present goings-on are informed to any degree with the ideas of the dissidents who remain in place? And what about the opinions of the latest emigrants, those leaving in April 1987, who are fully versed in the events of the day? Do they deserve short shrift as well? Many of them, by no means all embittered long-time *refuseniks*, profess to have learned of *glasnost* only after their arrival in the West. "Detached perspective", if genuine, can be a valuable asset in arriving at a general picture; but I wonder to what extent it is offset, in an outsider, by the disadvantage of astigmatic selectivity.

It is undeniable that things are happening in the Soviet Union. A Mr Rybakov may get his book on the Stalin era published at long last, if only in instalments - not that we are likely to learn from it, say, what went on in the basement of the present Russian Embassy in Moscow, formerly the house of one Lavrenty Beria. A young Mr Gorbenshchikov may get his records issued by Melodiya, if unremotely - not that the Soviet rock fans are in for heavy metal; in fact, it is uncertain if even his religious lyrics, which have prevented his songs being heard other than as samizdat tapes, will be available. And, yes, a famous writer, winner of the Nobel Prize and safely dead for nearly three decades, may see the light of day, if only in a limited edition. But such things, though they may *épater les soviétiques*, are not without precedent behind the Iron Curtain. Any Western analyst of the Soviet Union can tell you that Gorbachev is taking a leaf out of the book of Edward Gierak, to cite only the most recent example of a commissar who sought by similar means, carried still further, and to neutralize the opposition, as well as to land Western credits. Gorbachev is using the same method, with an eye to the policy of *glasnost*. The changes effected within such a context have nothing to do with the liberalization of the system, but everything with the preservation of it.

The winds of *perestroika* are not winds of systemic change in either political or economic terms. Their purpose seems twofold. On the one hand, they are meant to blow good for the new Kremlin faction. Hence, as Brown correctly implies, they originate in the apparatus. What he fails to understand is that they are not the cause of the division within the establishment, but an outcome of it. Division came every time power is transferred within a totalitarian system. A "reform" campaign is instituted as a weapon in the struggle for power; new brooms to sweep clean is a matter of course.

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That is why *Pravda*, for example, can now criticize small fry (and selected bigger fry) among the *apparatchiks*, while such topics as the Soviet space programme or environmental pollution remain out of bounds. On the other hand, the changes are part of a dramatic rescue operation of the Soviet economy, aimed at reaching Western levels of technology. Marxist ideology has long been dead as a door-nail in the Soviet Union, but this is more easily concealed than economic bankruptcy. There is a deep-seated (and well-founded) inferiority complex, manifesting itself in such "innovations", calculated to give the impression of membership of the international community, as the establishment of an Italian-style fast-food restaurant or the Russian edition of *Radio* magazine, apparently in the hope that super-computers will follow.

I would not discount the release of a hundred or so political prisoners as "cosmetic" (even though the number is only two-thirds of that originally leaked); I would not do so even if it involved only a single man. But any gratitude I find morally repulsive, seeing that the pardons have been granted on humiliating terms, that the identity papers of the released have been conspicuously marked with "criminal record", thereby precluding suitable employment, and that many have not been allowed to settle where they wish; seeing, further, that there are 2,400, by the lowest estimate, who remain in the concentration camps for political offences, officially so classified. This is to take no account of those committed under Articles 142 and 227 of the Soviet penal code for religious offences, none of whom, significantly, benefited from the recent "amnesties" - as is the case with those imprisoned, under no article at all, in mental hospitals, and untold others never mentioned.

I find it morally repulsive to rejoice in any *glasnost* distributed by tyrants; for, as Étienne de La Boétie observed, they give the people only what they have stolen from them, as a ruse to perpetuate their bondage. Indeed, his short *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, written in 1552, has greater bearing on the situation in the Soviet Union today than the books reviewed by Archie Brown.

ALEXANDER MASOVIANUS.
32 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Narrative Painting

Sir, - I am shocked by John Nash's response to the *Narrative Painting* show (Commentary, May 1). The aim of the Looking Into Paintings series is to reduce the number of people who will past pictures asking themselves only "Do I like this?" Yet Dr Nash limits himself to precisely that, even if at a connoisseur's level.

Should we really follow the media's insistence on "misapprehensions"? We borrowed principally from municipal galleries and the exhibition have toured these (national collections do not lend to touring shows of this sort). They own many fine works for the Portrait and Landscape shows to draw on; it was interesting as well as disappointing to find they had relatively few distinguished narrative pictures. But we wanted to draw attention to the developing conventions shaping these categories of art, not to parade treasures.

Yes, the Philippe de Champaigne is superb whereas the Gauffier is an awkward but also typical piece of Neoclassical theatricality. One of the points offered for consideration was that narrative paintings are often like stage performances: a handsome copy of a Varonese could help substantiate that as well as remind us of the birth of opera. We ignored the phoney frontier between old art and new and hoped to connect the media cliché about modern art being altogether revolutionary. In fact the 1980s are witnessing a positive revival of narrative art and the Kiff and Jackowski are splendid examples of it - but Nash does not comment on the modern picture.

What about the Stanley Spencer, William Roberts, John Armstrong . . . ? I must not fall into Nash's trap and put all my emphasis on the quality of individual exhibits. Everything should be placed by illustrating how pictures tell stories and how the traditions live on and renew themselves.

NORBERT LUNDON.
24 Norfolk Road, Brighton.

Government and Education

Sir, - Small things first. Noel Annan (Letters, May 1) refuses to recognize the difference between the many questions that might be discussed (like: what do I think of differential payments for professors) and the important issues that can claim attention on this page. Since he now asks two questions that do bear on central issues: yes, I have some regard for Maurice Shock's efforts at re-grouping (though why Lord Annan, with his post-trade-union historical pessimism, even thinks such activity matters is not clear). I criticized attitudes that "predominated" in university administrations, which plainly left scope for exceptions (we have one nearer home than Leicester). As for Cardiff, what I hear suggests that it is too simple to read that as a "planned act of defiance", nor would I be in favour of crude acts of defiance; but forms of solidarity well short of the institutionally suicidal might have been tried, and failures of solidarity avoided.

Annan didn't like having the essentials of his attitude diagnosed. Not surprisingly. But to suggest that Popper's attack on essentialism helps his cause is bumbag. I had no need to "invent" an essence for his letter of April 10, any more than for George Walden's of March 27. I merely pointed out what each aimed to do or concealed. Annan claims I misrepresented him on specific points. Yet his declared preferences only confirm the diagnosis: "rationalization", "concentration", "industry-funded research" are the palliative clichés of man in retreat from commitment to the full investment in education that we need. (Does anyone still really believe there is an indefinitely expandable market for Salfords, and that industrial backers will be drawn to just those universities that are refused public financing?)

The same resignation is evident in Annan's further musings in answer to George Bernard's letter of April 24. To talk about public expenditure priorities as if each deserving object were cherished and only threatened by the rival claims of the others, and not by government's aversion to public expenditure and investment as such, is to ignore what it scarcely takes the "political passions" Annan sneers at to see. If our defence of education as a national need is now political, it is through no choice of ours. It is a sign of how far British society has moved away not just from consensus but from common sense.

Robert Jackson (Letters, May 1) tries to diagnose, in turn, academics' present feelings and the "essence of [their] culture". Are we truly "hysterical - nay paranoid" to speak of a "crash course in decline" since 1981? I don't think we "disdain dry-as-dust facticity", though we much dislike slipshod statistics and the kind of PR exercise George Walden was engaging in. Mr Jackson's own statistics, from the White Paper, show a rise in student numbers of 20 and 16.5 per cent respectively against an increase in funding of 3.2 per cent. That is by any standard a sharp decline. One might even, *pace* Walden, restore the indelible word "cuts", and Jackson is honest enough to say that "the issues were at first too narrowly conceived by government simply as one field of application of its wider programme of reducing the burden of public expenditure".

Are such cuts really too more than a necessary abandonment of "Rolls-Royce aspirations", securing better value for money? Oxford's most recent grant allocation and projections (and other universities have fared worse in the past) would have involved a 20 per cent reduction over all activities by 1990: the equivalent of closing several major faculties. Even with the money restored last autumn by Mr Baker, the reduction will be 11 per cent.

With what reason? Jackson uses "Rolls-Royce" as the colloquialism for "excessive luxury". Yet behind that lies the sense of "top quality". A metaphorical share-flotation of British universities on the market of international esteem would produce some positive answers to the questions about both teaching and research raised in his penultimate paragraph (he gives no grounds for his implied scepticism). Can we maintain that quality with continuing reduction of funds and continual harassment on all fronts? I do not know the answer to that, and nor does anyone in Jack-

son's government. It cannot have calculated the effects of its measures except as crude budgetary savings. It is blithely risking a real decline. That cannot be rationalized as a "rationalization".

None of this is to say there was no room for improvement, and in particular for clearer accountability. Nor can any public body claim the right to purely internal accountability (though there are at present public bodies of which that is more urgently true for the good of our national life than it is of universities). But in giving an account of themselves universities have a right to expect an understanding for aims that are more permanent than particular policies of particular governments. Jackson denies us that understanding when he assimilates everything to a "market" model. To call us a "self-regarding producer-monopoly", as if we merely "sold" an educational product of our own choosing to the customers, ignores the much larger concern with what it is we are investigating. We are neither "producer-led" nor "demand-led", but "object-led". We are studying a world that is not just a market; trying to get as right as we can the picture of our part of it; and trying to transmit our criteria and methods to students - for whom they will be an essentially transferable, adaptable set of skills. There are limits to how far those procedures can or should be shaped by market considerations. It is the exploration of the object, conducted in "conditions of pluralism" (I don't see how Jackson can be against both pluralism and monopoly) that gets usable results, of a kind and a value that cannot be predicted. "Demand-led" science will not go very far. And as for the locating of universities within a "rentier culture of wealth-consumption" in contrast to a "more entrepreneurial culture directed to wealth-creation", the relevance of the former to education (which is neither strictly a consumption nor a production activity) is as uncertain as is the present success of the latter. And has Jackson even got his historical movement the right way round: present interest-rate policy, tax policy, housing policy, flotations, extreme monetary caution - all this is *getting* away from a rentier culture? Even broad brushes shouldn't miss that much detail.

Finally, may I make an equally broad-brush suggestion? Namely, that government should give up the pursuit of scapegoats which has typified its treatment of the whole teaching profession, as if they were almost single-handedly responsible for economic failure. It should look instead to links and communications. That means not just assuming universities are out of sympathy with industry, but asking how effectively ideas are allowed to circulate; how willingly they are accepted in established structures; how much government itself has done to back substantive innovation (as distinct from the rsg-bag of institutional changes Mr Jackson describes as "innovations"). That would be less alienating for all of us. It's about time.

T. J. REED.
St John's College, Oxford.

Sir, - Even Noel Annan, in his letters (April 10, May 1) defending this government's treatment of the universities, does not defend its ham-fisted and ill-considered efforts to change them by drastic financial cuts alone, and has absolutely no answer to my point that both the arts and the sciences are at risk in consequence.

Not a month passes without news that some acquaintance of mine, junior or senior, is moving to a country where the advantages of education are not taken for granted, and where faculty have not been made to feel that education is as much a drain on the economy as is unemployment. This is why so many of us, summoning up those Thatcherite virtues of courage, adaptability and enterprise, have "got on our bikes", to use Norman Tebbit's memorable phrase, and left our country; few look back at the appallingly wasteful results of the Government's malvolent ineptitude, and fewer still will ever return. In fact Britain can afford reduced access to education even less than it can afford increased unemployment. If British universities are so "undeserving" of public support, why do my American colleagues esteem them so highly, and why are the scholars and scientists they produce among Mrs Thatcher's most successful exports? If the universities are expected to find private sup-

port, where are the tax incentives to encourage that support to be given?

The truth is that higher education, like finance or public broadcasting, is something at which Britain has excelled. But the Government has preferred to cut and hack at the system, rather than invest in it to maintain highly profitable links with the rest of the world. Universities are a soft target for cuts; their personnel respond with argument or emigration, not with strikes or riots (and certainly not with the *ad hominem* nastiness distressingly prevalent among the Government's spokesmen). The fall-out from such cuts is invisible in the short term, which is what matters to this government; only to posterity will the cancer of the new barbarism become obvious within the body politic.

You cannot avoid intellectual decline without finding room for intellectuals; it was certainly a transfusion of academics leaving Nazi Germany that gave Britain its world leadership in my own discipline. British academics will not stay when the already inadequate funds for their research can be threatened without warning; nor can Britain live by science and computing alone. Far from forcing down the number of places in the humanities, the Americans have now come to see the value of rebuilding their admirable tradition of an all-round education; at Columbia, fundamental texts like the *Iliad* or Aristotle's *Ethics* are required reading for all undergraduates, whether they will specialize in engineering, medicine or whatever; stiffer foreign-language requirements are being imposed; and enrolments in the arts nation-wide are going up.

Lord Annan takes my allusion to Tacitus for a misquotation. But I will admit to one mistake, a far worse one: that of taking the Tory Party of 1979 for the Tory Party of Lord Butler, to whom education owes so much and of whose college, Trinity, I was proud to be a Research Fellow. The true enemies of education and research are not the likes of Lord Annan, whose arguments can be debated, and who is so obviously uncomfortable with much that this government has done and not done. We are obliged to him for reminding us how many priorities it rates higher than education; but I do hope Britain's future does not lie in its prisons rather than its schools. The real danger is that another Tory government will instead give heed to, for example, the *Daily Mail's* ludicrous idea that funds to bait the brain drain could be procured by abolishing tenure and collapsing three academic years into two, making "lazy dons more efficient". The *Daily Mail* is a trustworthy index of populist thought, and Mrs Thatcher is nothing if not a populist leader; nor are the needs of higher education understood by an electorate among which that education is spread so thin (hence the populist view, exploited by George Walden, that the brain drain is largely a matter of salaries).

One round of random cuts might be accidental; several begin to look like policy. Everyone concerned about education, research and Britain's future has now had fair warning that any extension of this government's arrogant bold on power would only worsen the already grave situation which it has largely created. The time has come for a change.

RICHARD JANKO.
Department of Classics, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027.

The Peace Pledge Union

Sir, - Ben Pimlott's review of Caroline Moorehead's *Troublesome People* (May 8) refers to the "pacifist Peace Pledge Union". For more than fifty years, the Peace Pledge Union has been Britain's main pacifist organization. Its members sign the pledge: "I renounce war, and will ever support or sanction another." It is still alive and well, and living at 6 Eadsleigh Street, London WC1.

A. J. AUGARDB.
18 Carlton Road, Oxford.

A misplaced line in Robert Jackson's letter in last week's *TLS* affected the sense of its fourth paragraph. The second sentence should have read: "Until the late nineteenth century the University was subordinated to wider interests - the Church, to the case of the ancient universities, Utility in that of the modern foundations."

John 13:1-15

COMMENTARY

A universal weakness

Lesley Chamberlain

VÁCLAV HAVEL
Temptation
The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

Václav Havel has considered the temptation of power soberly in his essay, "Power and the Powerless", and explores it lustily now in this reworking of the Faust legend. Dr Foustka, a meekly discontented scientist in a forcibly "scientific" society, has been courting seditious thoughts about the mystery of the universe. His weakness is exploited by Fistula, an apparent dissident, and the Doctor under his influence becomes the lion of the Institute, seducing the innocent secretary Maggie with metaphysical talk and dazzling his mistress/colleague Vilma with unprecedented passion in bed. As with Faust so with Foustka, life is a series of couplings and duels and the Devil's men is the winner. Foustka after a small struggle abandons his scruples for Fistula's gift of the spirit of politics. With his new skill of lying and counter-lying he acquires himself brilliantly when denounced at work for hermetic dabbling. He seems to have outplayed his time-serving colleagues at their own game until, at the Institute's Halloween fancy-dress party, Goethe's Walpurgisnacht, the Devil claims his soul.

The members of the Institute, led by their wily, serpentine homosexual director, coexist and collaborate with officially-encouraged coarseness: this is the temptation of the title. Havel is concerned here, as he was in *Largo Desolato*, with the human weakness which gives in to it. The temptation is universal. Men are vain – John Shrapnel's black polo-necked intellectual wallows in his sudden desirability – and they fear for their skin. Thus it is in the Eastern Bloc and everywhere. Fear and eroticism are the two faces of the human beast. When something goes awry, like the embar-

assment of having a Foustka on the staff, someone must be blamed, so enamoured little Maggie is sacked. Following Goethe's Gretchen, she goes mad. She is a frightening example to her colleagues of failure to survive the system and they redouble their efforts to keep their heads down. What we see on stage is humdrum daily life, heightened by a little stress on corruption, and the result is devastating.

In Roger Michell's energetic production the play is very funny, especially to those familiar with the pictorial reality of Socialist life, with its rituals of pseudo-comradeship and its doltish upstarts who become eternal deputy directors. The themes from Faust and themes from institutional life are overlaid and intertwined, and the gestures of the characters and David Roger's simple sets – a bed, a table, a serpent in a birch tree – amusingly replay them. The deputy-director's handbag-clutching, ill-dressed wife is a model of silent conformity, just the sort you see at Party Congresses. Paul Webster's Director manifests that special strain of Socialist anxiety.

Foustka's temptation has been to taste the unprincipled life everyone else leads without too much trouble. His satanic colleagues (fancy dress reveals them in their true guise) survive because they recognize some authority, even if it is a lie. But, as Foustka tells us too late from the midst of the Halloween smoke, he more easily finds himself adrift, like the writer at the centre of *Largo Desolato*.

Havel has written a sophisticated play of many colours and forms, of wider import than *Largo Desolato*, and more dramatic. Moreover, we are watching the result of a private act of healing. The programme quotes Havel as having been tormented during four years in prison in the early 1980s by reflecting how easily his statements in good faith could be put to bad use by malign opposition and how unwittingly in his Charter 77 activities he might have led others into misfortune. The artist in him is perhaps stronger than the dissident.

The weight of tradition

Michael Meyer

HENRIK IBSEN
Rosmersholm
Cottesloe Theatre

Some plays work however badly staged: A Doll's House, Ghosts and Hedda Gabler are as indestructible as Hamlet. But there are others, and some very great plays among them, which, if less than near-perfectly done, do not seem even good to someone who does not know them. *Osella* and *Antony and Cleopatra* come into this category; so do *The Lady from the Sea*, *Little Eyolf*, and, especially, *Rosmersholm*, Freud's favourite play by his favourite playwright. It is full of what A. B. Walkley, writing in 1891, described as "the obstinate questionings of invisible things", and properly performed, it is, like *The Lady from the Sea*, a rare experience.

Sarah Pia Anderson is a gifted and exciting young director, and *Rosmersholm* is a play she particularly wanted to direct. I have to say that I think her production sadly misguided, and in an unexpected way. One expected it to be fresh and inventive, perhaps to excess; in the event, it is painfully slow and largely one-paced, giving an impression of misplaced reverence, and only one of the six characters is adequately acted. Nor is it well designed. Rosmersholm would have been a gracious eighteenth-century house, not the gloomy and bleakly furnished pile suggested here, and the portraits of Rosmer's ancestors, "men of God and men of war", would have spanned the centuries; all we see here are twenty-eight Victorian heads peering from gray-coloured backgrounds, all seemingly by the same artist, with not a wig among them. Most surprisingly, the production is frequently melodramatic, not only in the swelling music and intensified lighting which underline the final exit towards the double

suicide but also in the stereotyped gestures of the cast; Rosmer spends much time with his hand on his heart, suggesting nothing so much as hypocrisy. The new "version" by Frank McGuinness is stilted and often obscure; actors are given impossible lines to say.

Under the circumstances, one hesitates to blame the cast, but David Ryall's Kroll is intolerably slow and inexplicably plebeian (and it is Kroll who has to drive the first two acts forward; Rebecca and Rosmer react to him). Roger Lloyd Pack is in fact about the same age as Rosmer, forty-three, but with his boyish face he looks no older than his Rebecca, which blurs the point that this is a love affair between a middle-aged man and a young woman. It would help if he greyed his hair. Nor does he suggest an aristocrat; socially he looks and sounds like Rebecca. Above all, one needs to feel that Rosmer is a lion chained by his inhibitions; but this is a doomed and gloomy fellow from his first entrance, hardly worth Rebecca's efforts. Mrs Helseth, who has been his housekeeper for years and is written as a mother figure to both him and Rebecca, is for some reason played as a girl in her twenties. The fine cameo role of Mortensgaard, the left-wing editor, goes for nothing. Robert Eddisson makes something of Brendel, Rosmer's old tutor, but his Bloomshury nesthete is hardly the fierce old eagle Ibsen intended. Only Suzanne Barilash gets near the spirit of the play. Hers is a fine performance; but, like all Ibsen's characters, Rebecca is co-opted as the half of several relationships, and none of these relationships is hers credit or even interesting. Ibsen has not hit his stride since his last play, but his *Master Builder* and *Bergam's Head* were flashy and shallow, *Brand* and *The Wild Duck* dull, and *Borkman*, despite a glittering cast, hollowly operatic. The programme note for *Rosmersholm*, apart from getting the date of his last play wrong, tells us that he was born at Glimstad, which is like saying that Shakespeare was born in Blackpool.

Edges of darkness

John Pitcher

SHAKESPEARE
The Merchant of Venice
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

In Shakespeare's Venice this year, under Bill Alexander's direction, the first question is how close to the edge can you stand before toppling over or falling in? You must stand safe side of the canals, bridges and pontoons, if you are a Jew, or a woman, or a man who desires a woman; one pace further, from one element to another, and you may have passed the limits circumscribing gender, creed, race, and even the objects of your love. The Stratford production begins with Antonio, centre and front of stage, on the uttermost point of a wooden jetty. Immediately behind are a landing stage and bridge, and arched above these a Bridge of Sighs, all of them backing on to a wall of crumbling plaster, and tatty, exposed brickwork. No Grand Canal here, in Kit Surrey's set, but rather a Venetian dead-end, and so it must be, given the sexual limits Antonio longs to transgress. When Bassanio winds around him, begging money, the merchant crosses the line and seizes a full-mouthed kiss. Thereafter, line-crossing and finding the precipices seem unavoidable for all the other characters. Old Gobbo, sand-blind, taps his stick along the jetty's edge, playing out comically dangerous steps (which an eyesless Gloucester will repeat at Dover); and in Belmont, after her marriage, young Jessica, who has crossed from one faith to another, will come to think the gap between Christian husbands and wives as great as any between Dido and Aeneas (she is irretrievably disturbed at Portia's talk of bedding her lawyer, Bellario).

Such emphasis on the margins cannot but direct our attention to the Jews, the people who have always lived there. And in this production they are Jews who have kept themselves true to Jehovah's covenant with Abraham. When Anthony Sher's Shylock has to receive the Venetians, it is in his black desert tent, and he is still the Jew of the wilderness, and of the Eastern Mediterranean, not some domesticated, begowned compromiser. Because the very language of Venice is anathema to this Shylock – and this is where Sher's genius shows itself most – he articulates it, and repeats it, and chews it through a mouth nearly gagging on its alien hypocrisy. One purpose of Shakespeare's rhetoric is thus entirely clarified for us: the slick, practised Venetian tongues are prepared to compound tropes and word-play even out of a friend's jeopardy (in III.ii, for all his preference for "meagre lead", Bassanio chooses to modulate elegantly the sounds and pronouns in his "myself", "my friend", "my means" speech). To Shylock, the Christians' ornament is as larded and repulsive as the pork they eat. His own language, closer to

gesture than words, is in the bunched fast striking the palm – as when he counts the rams going at it in I.iii, or insists on revenge in III. At last, in the trial scene, this division of languages culminates in a great contest of ritual. As Antonio is made ready for the knife, and the Christians begin their helpless, prefigured liturgy, Sher's bearded, ferocious Shylock takes up an old Habraic song of sacrifice, and drowns them out. But the Jew too has crossed a limit, for this is not an offering intended for the Lord, but merely for human appetite. By this light, Venetian law, and Portia's justice, may come to seem more like the instruments than the causes of the retribution which is to fall on Shylock. Perhaps feeding a hunger for forbidden flesh is as much his dead-end as Antonio's, and must receive a comparable moralisation.

If we look to Belmont for some counterweight to the racial hatred and the violence in all of this, we shall not be entirely satisfied. Deborah Findlay's Portia has nothing of the healer, or seer, or Desdemona in her. She wants her husband white, bright, and speaking the right Latin tongue – no Prince of Morocco come telling tall stories will do for this young heiress. Even if the blood beneath everyone's skin is red, her father could surely not have wanted all her elegant curls, flounced dresses and milky looks to be married to a black face. She cuffs her negro servant with a rellish which looks customary, and she keeps a polle but distinguishing distance from Lorenzo's new bride. The truth is that she is very much a man's woman, or a Venetian's woman (arms raised in romantic triumph at getting the best husband around, hands constantly pressing to her chest in demure alarms, etc). Played like this, what Portia wants to preserve herself from is not an excess of love, but the challenge to go beyond herself, to intrude into the engrossed male decay of Venice. The venture to rescue Antonio, or at least free Bassanio from him, is only a passage which brings her back to square one. It appears that she and Nerissa never really wanted to be out of their bodies at all.

So there is no comic release or festive revelation in Alexander's version of the play, just a frustrated sense of how easy it is for the Christian males to stay on top. They are permitted to cross boundaries (a drunken Salerio can get away with trying to touch up Solanio), but no one else is. Images of the cost of this frustration stay in the memory: of Shylock, seated, bleeding, and rocking to and fro, eyeballs staring white, made mad by a daughter and a wilderness of monkeys; of the catamite zany in the streets of Venice, scrambling after Bassanio's favours (in a production as intelligent as this, these mala sax objects are of course played by girls); and, at the very end, of Jessica, half kneeling before Antonio, trying to get back the long chain and cross she has dropped in her haste to keep up with Lorenzo. Antonio draws it from her, mastering for a moment a victim who is still nothing but a Jew and a woman. And then there is darkness.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 329

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than June 5.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 329" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC4M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on June 12.

1 Home from the river or pump moving stately and calm to the laundry; Ay doing household work, which someone, after all, must do. Needful, graceful therefore, as washing, cooking, and scouring. Or, if you please with a fork in the garden uprooting potatoes.

2 Yes, this the Muses sing of happy swains, Because the Muses never knew their pains.

3 Walking round in the park, Should feel better than work.

Competition No 325

Winner: Alistair Elliot
Answers:

1 You thought I had the strength of men, Because with men I dared to speak, And courted science eow and then. And studied Latin for a week; But woman's woman, even when She reads her Ethics in the Greek. Mary, Coleridge, "A Clever Woman".

2 She talks BEETHOVEN; frowns disapprobation; At BALZAC's came, sighs it at 'poor GEORGE SAND'S'. Knows that she has exceeded pretty hands; Speaks Latin with a right accentuation; And gives at need (as one who understands) Draft, counsel, diagnosis, exhortation. W. E. Henley, "Staff-Nurse New Style".

3 So too have known a likely lad That had a soured fisher's wrist Turn to a drunken journalist; A girl that knew all Dante once Live to bear children to a dunce. W. B. Yeats, "Why Should Not Old Men Be Married".

The art of confrontation: Berlin's 750th anniversary celebrations

John Boyd Whyte

In his essay "On the uses and disadvantages of history for life", one of the *Unlabeled Meditations*, Nietzsche insists that "the question of the degree to which life requires the service of history at all... is one of the supreme questions and concerns in regard to the health of a race, a people or a culture". This passage is quoted in the catalogue to one of the flood of exhibitions organized to mark the 750th anniversary of Berlin and it can be taken as an appropriate motto for the whole enterprise. The historical grounds for the anniversary are slightly shaky. They follow a pageant, organized by Goebbels and staged in 1937, which labelled the figure of Berolina escorted by knights in armour and storm-troopers, together with Frederick the Great and Alexander von Humboldt. The justification for this argument, beyond employing the organizational chaos left over from the 1936 Olympics, was the existence of a seal dated 1237 with the first recorded mention of the settlement Cölln, later to become Berlin.

On the eastern side of the Berlin Wall, labelled as a "frontier of peace" by Erich Hönigstein in the official guide to the East German celebrations, the emphasis has been placed on the reconciliation of the socialist capital city with its pre-socialist history. In the 1950s the East German authorities demolished historical landmarks like the Stadtschloss and Schinkel's Akademie on purely ideological grounds. More recently, however, the dialogue with the past has been reopened. Frederick the Great is again riden down Unter den Linden and the focus of the anniversary celebrations is the second arena in the city centre, including the architectural ensemble flanking the Platz der Akademie (formerly Gendarmenmarkt) and the Nikolai Viertel, which has been rebuilt in its historical street plan and scale.

Women in peril

Philip Brady

GUTHRIED SPERAIM LESSING
Zerkow
Museum von Bernheim
Young Vic Studio

Literary historians, who have had richer pickings from Lessing than theatre audiences, place him at the start of German drama. Not these mala sax objects are of course played by girls); and, at the very end, of Jessica, half kneeling before Antonio, trying to get back the long chain and cross she has dropped in her haste to keep up with Lorenzo. Antonio draws it from her, mastering for a moment a victim who is still nothing but a Jew and a woman. And then there is darkness.

My terror cannot but appear ridiculous", "let me kiss this kind parental hand" – with language of this unhand-me-villain kind *Emilia* seems to inhabit Victorian England. The translation indeed dates from 1878. It is in any case a play which in outline comes close to melodrama: an emotionally unstable prince, giving his villainous aide too free a band in pursuit of the beautiful, middle-class Emilia, finds himself involved in the murder of her husband, his designs on Emilia exposed and Emilia dead at the hands of her protective father. "Virtue in Peril", "A Father's Quarry" or "Villainy Exposed" – numerous subtitles spring to mind.

But there is another level, and p.l.c. reach for it through the stiffness and the creaking of the plot. Without wrenching the play out of context, they place it in a sleek, modern world where would-be-machomale role, inseparably and where the "secret, irrepressible crime" that the Prince wants is the currency of Robert Gary's Prince and his enemy aide Mariadelli (Christopher Hollis) – and depends on their interaction – avoid conventional villainy and vividly suggest the tension between two men who are poles apart but

need each other. At the centre of this production Emilia herself remains a cipher – too uncomplicatedly naive in Naomi Cason's hands to attract this Prince, let alone to fear temptation. But around her Malcolm Edwards's production creates a briskly moving, explosive world in which – through the late entry of Sharon Bower's Orsini, the Prince's most recent mistress, now rejected – a modern note is struck on behalf of abused womanhood, struck loud enough in fact to make what could be a dated debate about a young woman in peril into a play in which women expose the sexually exploitative male.

Woman abused is also at the heart of *Minna von Barnhelm*, but now the threat is psychological not physical. Moral victory comes not through a woman's death but – this is Enlightenment comedy – through a woman's dexterity, outwitting arguments, laying bare the capricious logic of a man who is honourable to a fault. The producer, John Steer, and the cast have found the vigorous life behind the concepts and the ingenuities. In this they are much helped by a translation which in this case updates the nineteenth-century version, giving the comic characters in particular – loyal servant, stiff-necked Sergeant Major, oily landlord, part lady's-maid – every chance to rise above stereotype. And they seize their chances, providing not simply comic relief but a stable world of sane, ordinary people. In the eye of the storm, likewise sane but by no means ordinary, is Sharon Bower's Minna. It is a most accomplished reading of a complex character, by turns flippant, vulnerable, tender, coolly rational, implacably determined. Above all she conveys the strain of it all, the strain of having to hatten down natural warmth and impulsiveness in self-defence against a good man made ruthless by misfortune.

When Minna faces – and flummoxes – her reluctant lover Tellheim in a lengthy verbal battle the comedy could easily sag under a weight of words. That it does not is due not least to John Steer's production, which here, as elsewhere, has a natural, unforced momentum and a wealth of fine detail.

and already begins with the asphalt. For the pavements are regal in their scale and transform the poorest wretch into a grand seigneur, strolling on the terrace of his palace". In recent weeks the expensive and expensive bustle of the boulevard has been further enriched by seven pieces of sculpture and the grands seigneurs have reacted with predictable vigour.

There were to have been eight, but the suggestion by Edward and Nancy Kienholz to stage a jousting match between two massive inflated condom on the opposing crane, was abandoned as inappropriate to the moment. The parody of senseless confrontation has, as it turns out, been provided by the leading politicians in East and West, with both sides declining to acknowledge the celebrations in the opposing half of the city, and a fascinating battle of invitation and counter-invitation, refusal and counter-refusal. All this finds sculptural expression in the interwoven, but not quite touching limbs of Brigitte and Martin Matschinsky-Denninghoff's large, tree-like piece "Berlin", which forms an open portal on the east-west axis of Tauentzienstrasse.

More minimalist works, less obviously laden with symbolic meaning, have been created by George Rickey – a mobile beside the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche – and Josef Erben, an elegantly curved mast, seventeen metres long and supported by two guy wires to create a notional pyramid at the intersection of Kurfürstendamm and Bleibtreustrasse. Two female figures by Rolf Szymanski, one in gloriously white Carrara marble, one in rusting cast iron, suggest primeval and modern time, the city's genius for self-renewal. Less optimistically, Frank Domself's shadow-throwing figure, set on a marble-clad plinth worth of Arno Breker, suggests that appearances can deceive: the shadow is made of iron and set into the roadway.

These five pieces are thematically uncontentious, and have been accepted, albeit with re-

Unideological images

David Nokes

Omnibus: Enemy of the State
BBC1

Television drama-documentaries on the lives of artists frequently adopt a style of visual mimicry, consciously modelling scenes on famous paintings, rendering the artist's environment into a permanent studio for his imagination. Andrew Piddington's excellent *Omnibus* portrait of George Grosz went one stage better than this. Intelligently avoiding the temptation to turn line into flesh by reducing Grosz's lampoons to a series of *tableaux vivants*, the programme itself adopted the form of a Grosz caricature. Its title *Enemy of the State*, while echoing the Nazis' designation of Grosz, was more cleverly an allusion to Grosz's famous satire "Pillars of Society". And, although Piddington's portrait never attempted the savagery of Grosz's attack on the bull-necked, blank-eyed representatives of Church and State, it cast a sardonic light on Grosz's legendary reputation as a political satirist. In this version, Grosz himself emerged as the very bourgeois whom his drawings vilified.

In this brilliantly crafted film, images of America were used to provide an ironic frame for Grosz's vision of German decadence. On his first emergence into café society Grosz was known as "the Americans". Adopting the style of a painted dandy, he would haunt the flea-pit cinemas of Berlin in search of two-reel cowboy films while his imagination fed on the lurid illustrations in American pulp magazines. Piddington showed the wheel coming full circle during the long exile in America, with Grosz himself providing illustrations for pulp magazines in an increasingly desperate attempt to turn his dream of American freedom into reality. Throughout his life Grosz's dominating motivation was represented in the film not as ideology but as the bourgeois god, money: his sole philosophy "to become a famous artist and to get rich quick". Even during his temporary affiliation to the Communist Party at the time

of the abortive Spartakist revolution, he described the proletariat as a "dung-heap" and socialism as a parlour-game. Maintaining the American connection, Grosz's frequent court appearances on charges of blasphemy and sedition were treated like the arrival of a matinee idol for a film première. Striding into the courtroom with his mull on his arm and mobbed by fans, Kenneth Haigh as George Grosz tossed quips to the huddle of reporters while flashbulbs popped all round.

All this, while debunking Grosz's personal status as a political satirist, gave his works, paradoxically, a new sharpness and vitality. By presenting Grosz as himself part of the opportunistic and hedonist world which he depicted, the film allowed his satires to appear less as simple political indictments than as a complex vision of a fractured and corrupt society. What was particularly striking about this *Omnibus* film was its success in finding a television analogy for Grosz's satires without resorting either to simple imitation, or to merely pointing the camera at a series of drawings. A well-judged montage of film-clips, dramatization and news-reel evoked a hallucinatory vision of Grosz's Barilla as a living theatre of the absurd, an appropriate and dramatic setting for the drawings. "In Berlin even murder as an art". The film presented the brutal murders of communists by the Freikorps like a sequence of night-mareish cabaret turns. In the midst of all this, the arrival in Berlin of the first Dadaist theatre group appeared like a rather poor undergraduate revue; self-conscious Surrealism being merely a pale imitation of a reality in a society where million-fold inflation would soon turn arithmetic itself into a form of alchemy.

After 28 years of self-imposed exile in New York Grosz finally returned to Berlin in 1959. Six weeks later he fell down a flight of stairs and died. The film's last ironic image was of Grosz's outstretched hand closing with *rigor mortis* into the clenched fist of a communist salute. Framed like a newspaper picture the fist was the final caricature of a man universally celebrated for his denunciation of those bourgeois values he most cherished.

John Boyd Whyte

Wrestling with the Nazi legacy

Robert Knight

ANDREAS HILLGRUBER
Zweiter Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums
110pp. Berlin: Siedler.
186680 187 X
MARTIN BROZET
Nach Hitler: Der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Geschichte
Edited by Hermann Graml and Klaus-Dietmar Henke
326pp. Munich: R. Oldenbourg. DM48.
348633881 0

The title of Andreas Hillgruber's slim volume is misleading: the book consists of two separate essays, and there is in fact little attempt to link "the destruction of the German Reich" and "the end of European Jewry". It was the former essay which last year unleashed what has now become known as West Germany's *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute).

The battle was opened by Jürgen Habermas, the sociologist and philosopher, who in the columns of *Die Zeit* attacked what he saw as a neo-conservative attempt to underplay the horrors of the Third Reich. The issues which the debate raised go to the heart of the problems faced by all historians of Nazi Germany: those of national identity, of contemporary West German politics and the place of the Holocaust within German history. It raised methodological problems, too: above all, that of steering a line between empathetic "historical" understanding on the one hand and moral relativism on the other. By placing himself in the boots of the Wehrmacht soldier on the Eastern front Hillgruber had, in Habermas's view, left the cautious middle line between the two which most historians are content to follow. The worm's-eye view might be authentic but did that mean identifying with the worm (or in this case the Wehrmacht soldier)?

A few years ago it appeared that in West Germany the Rankean historical tradition, with its careful reconstruction of motives, and its attendant concern with geo-political factors, statecraft and the primacy of foreign policy, was dead and buried. The adept of "history as critical social science" appeared to have established their ascendancy and no self-respecting historical scholarship could afford to ignore Weber or Habermas.

More recently, the pendulum has begun to swing perceptibly against the "structuralist" historians. However, the most effective critic-

ism of them has come not from the traditionalists but from two other directions: those such as Lutz Niethammer, who are concerned to recover the complexity and immediacy of historical reality through *Alltagsgeschichte* (people's history), including oral history; and those, like Geoffrey Eley and David Blackbourn, who have sought to move away from an assiduous teleology which views Wilhelmine Germany primarily as an antechamber of the Third Reich.

Meanwhile, as the current controversy shows, the older conservative historiography was alive and kicking hard and Hillgruber, with support from Ernst Nolte and others, has now given it extra muscle power. His starting-point is to view the Eastern Front in the winter of 1944-5 through the eyes of those German officials and soldiers who were steeling themselves to protect hearth and home from an imminent "orgy of revenge" by the Red Army. But he goes one step further, arguing - with little justification - that the historian should not merely sympathize with their plight, but should also identify with their "desperate and self-sacrificial efforts", even though these necessarily entailed a prolongation of Nazi mass-murder. And he crowns his argument with a "world-historical" dimension by maintaining that the collapse of the German Reich in the East was not merely a disaster for Germany but also involved the loss of what Hillgruber calls the "European Centre".

The collection of essays by Martin Broszat, head of the Munich Institute of Contemporary History, eschews such dubious flights of fancy, and therein lies its value. Broszat insists on the importance of retaining a critical moral sensitivity, even while remaining essentially in sympathy with the historicist aspiration. For him, historical reality is an unspectacular anti-epic. The thrust of the articles presented in this volume is in favour of what Broszat - somewhat unfortunally - calls a "historicization" of the Third Reich. This means integrating the authentic experience of individual Germans into the historian's analysis. He criticizes both the apocalyptic viewpoint of Meinecke's "German catastrophe" and the pessimistic determinism of Plessner's "retarded nation". For the same reason he is critical of those who see Wilhelmine Germany as a stage on the route to Auschwitz. And he has a kind word in defence of *Alltagsgeschichte* against the charges of sentimentality and trivialization.

Broszat argues that West Germany's desire to present clear positive images and standards to the post-war generation has contributed to a "monumentalizing of the resistance and the exclusion of taboo areas", which is to the end



The German-Christian Sports Palace demonstration, November 13, 1933, during which the senior Nazi official in Berlin, Dr Krause (first on left), called for the Church's "liberation from the Old Testament with its commercial Jewish morality and from these stories of cattle-dens and pimps". The photograph is taken from Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Life in pictures by Eberhard Bethge, Renate Bethge and Christian Grömmels (Hpp. SCM Press. Paperback, £12.50. 033401896 X).

counterproductive. He argues, for example, that the revelation of Goerdeler's antisemitism may disturb those who wish to believe in an idealization of German resistance as a heroic epic of the "other Germany". But in fact "nearly all the resistance in the Nazi period was intermittent and patchy, and often went hand-in-hand with passivity, partial affirmation or even active participation" in the régime's activities. All this is done with gentlemanly restraint and it is only when Broszat lays into the bad scholarship of William Shirer or David Irving that a note of passion enters his often rather bloodless prose. (The important demolition of Irving, incidentally, has already appeared in English in *Aspects of the Third Reich*, edited by H. W. Koch, 1985.)

Broszat's contribution to the current West German discussion on the "singularity" of the Holocaust was characteristically judicious (*Die Zeit*, October 3, 1986). He defended Hillgruber against the charge that he had understated the crimes of the Third Reich while at the same time criticizing him and his publishers for fail-

ing to justify the provocative juxtaposition in the title of his book. He magisterially rebuffed Ernst Nolte - though more in sorrow than in anger - for the extraordinary argument that the idea for Auschwitz might have originated with what Nolte called the "Asiatic deed" of the destruction of the kulaks in the Soviet Union, and that the Nazis had therefore committed their atrocities because Hitler might have regarded the Germans as the potential targets for a similar "deed".

Pinelly, Broszat dismissed Michael Stiller's attempt to relegate the Third Reich into a twelve-year parenthesis of German history of which West Germans had otherwise reason to be proud. For Broszat it is precisely the moral sensitivity acquired through four decades of unspacious wrestling with the legacy of the Third Reich (the "schwierige Umgang", was title) which has enabled West Germans, for the first time, to make a cautious affirmation in favour of their existing political identity, to explore injections of national identity are required.

What it is like to live in the GDR, despite the few minor errors that have crept in. One does not, for instance, need "Western contexts" in order to obtain jeans, as they are also on sale in East Germany (albeit in variable quality). Christa Wolf, the GDR's leading writer, is not "more concerned with personal than public themes": her last book, *Kassandra* (1983), was censored precisely because it dealt openly with the issue of nuclear weapons (and she is about to publish a work on Chernobyl). And the anorak badges worn in the unofficial Peace Movement and banned by the régime so humiliated in 1982 (depicted, not the Western CND symbol, but (height of irony) the "swords into ploughshares" statue presented to the United Nations by the Soviet Union. This last incident typifies the atmosphere of the GDR. The state is by no means as bad as it might be, and Ardagh very fairly points to some of its progressive social legislation. But at the same time, with its authoritarian style, it displays the least attractive side of German attachment to orderliness and efficiency.

This is where Ardagh is at his best; not so much when he is telling us the number of cows in the average West German dairy herd (fifteen) or the annual per capita consumption of potatoes in the Federal Republic (eighty-six kilos), but when the snapshot becomes an X-ray and he penetrates to attitudes, motives and tendencies. Despite the problems with generalizing about national character, many of his observations will strike a chord with anyone familiar with German social life, from his contention that, in some respects at least, the Germans remain "temperamentally inclined to obedience", to his diagnosis of their "latent but unblinking seriousness". He does not mention Germany's most enduring myth, but in the clearly there is also still a kind of Faustian restlessness in their striving for perfection and their proneness to inaccuracy and self-doubt. The dominant note of Ardagh's account, however, is a positive one. Running throughout is his conviction that, to the Federal Republic, the more rigid Prussian tradition which have shaped the German character are now in retreat and are being replaced by softer strains. This is especially evident in the student generation of the 1960s, who are more informal, more caring and less obsessed with image than their parents. Ardagh dissects with particular skill the various trends among younger Germans, and his approach to the Greens combines benevolence with clear-headedness. As to the health of the nation that the new generation will inherit, on this he is guardedly optimistic, and certainly his confidence seems justified if progress hitherto is taken as the measure. It is hard to overstate the scale of West Germany's achievement, despite the occasional setback, in building a stable democracy from such unpromising material, and for this fact alone the Germans deserve respect and admiration. That may be equal love, but at least there is no longer cause to be jealous.

A Christian in a time of storm

Klemens von Klemperer

HEINRICH BONHOEFFER
Volume One: Sanctarum Communio
Edited by Josef van Soest
Hpp. 3459 01614 0
Volume Nine: Jugend und Studium 1918-1927
Edited by Hans Pfeifer
Hpp. 3459 01615 9
Hb: Chr. Kaiser

For German Protestant Churches, even if they avoided for sainthood, would at no time have been prepared to canonize Dietrich Bonhoeffer. One of the few German clergymen to take a stand against Nazi tyranny, he was imprisoned in April 1943 and executed for his role with the resistance two years later. His numerous writings, including the well-known *Letters and Papers from Prison*, have advanced theological thought at all levels. Bonhoeffer was and remains to this day an uncomfortable theologian. Under the influence of the Calvinist Karl Barth, he, the pious Lutheran, revolutionized Lutheranism - especially the way in which Martin Luther's message had come to be read on his own turf, namely in Germany.

To begin with, he departed from the theological optimism of his teachers at the University of Berlin who sought to correlate modern forms of Christianity, above all Luther's message, with the historical process of man's self-fulfilment. The German reading of Luther in particular, while accepting - with vengeance, as might say - his separation of the Kingdom of Christ from the Kingdom of the World, assigned inordinate powers to the latter. The result was, though not part of the Divine Plan, nevertheless seen as appointed by God to maintain order and thus to secure space in which salvation was to occur; politically, if not theologically, the state was given religious sanction. This was the particular German contribution to the so-called "liberal theology" which Dietrich Bonhoeffer took issue.

Following in the footsteps of Barth's "dialectical theology", he returned to the original Lutheran insistence on the "otherness of God": "the way of Jesus Christ", he wrote in *Discipleship*, "and therefore the way of all Christians, leads not from the world to God but from God to the world". God, then, was *deus absconditus* "hidden to us behind the sign of the cross" and accessible to us only through the gift of grace.

The circumstances of Bonhoeffer's life under Hitler's dictatorship, however, put his recovery of dialecticism to a test far more rigorous and troubling than any Barth had ever faced. Barth and Bonhoeffer were from the beginning in fundamental disagreement with the Nazi movement. Barth, having been dismissed from his post at the University of Bonn, found a welcome in his native Basel, where he continued his struggle against the pseudo-religious aspirations of Nazism. But first and foremost his resistance was theological in nature as it was directed, in the context of the Church Dispute between the State and the Churches, not against the new political authority in Germany but against the so-called "German Christians" who presumed to reconcile the gospel of Christ with the racial message of the Third Reich. These "Christians" represented the newest and meanest version of "liberal theology". When in the later 1930s Barth came round to advocate "active resistance against certain political authorities" and when in his letter to his fellow-theologian in Prague Josef Hromádka he argued that every Czech soldier fighting Nazi aggression was also "dying for the Church of Jesus", he did so from neutral Switzerland.

Bonhoeffer was also given an opportunity to witness the Nazis years from abroad; during his visit to New York City in the summer of 1939 his friends there had urged him to stay on and take up a post as pastor of the Protestant Church. He decided, however, to return to his homeland, for he was now convinced that he must share the trials ahead with his own people. He made this decision deliberately and responsibly, recognizing, as his friend and biographer Eberhard Bethge observed, "that he was not a man who would have to remain in Germany in full acceptance of guilt and responsi-

bility". Guilt and responsibility, then, took him into the conspiracy against Hitler and into martyrdom. At first, immediately after the Nazi seizure of power, Bonhoeffer became the younger generation's leading spokesman against the Nazification of the Protestant Church. But the Church Dispute was to be far from only a "way station" leading to an "altogether different apposition". This was "opposition to the blood", that is involvement in conspiracy to the point of condoning tyrannicide. He thus put to a severe test Luther's doctrine of the two realms.

It is fitting here to look into the motivation for Bonhoeffer's entanglement in the "worldly sector". No doubt the agony of need (*Noi*) was what catapulted him into action. As a Christian living in a "time of storm" he saw himself justified in translating Luther, who had gone so far as condoning "suffering disobedience", into resistance. However, Bonhoeffer's step was no less motivated by religious considerations of a compelling nature, namely by his intense concern with the question of what Jesus means to us today and of "how he can help us to be good Christians in the modern world". In the course of time Bonhoeffer had become intensely preoccupied with the problem of faith and religion in an inevitably secularized world. He did not often use the word "secularization"; indeed he did not lament that development. It was a reality to be faced, the reality, as he preferred to call it, of the "world come of age". Nazism itself was a symptom of the modern loss of faith and the desperate effort to undo secularization by filling the void it created with an ideology, that is with a political orthodoxy having the distinctive features of a surrogate religion. Here lay, for Bonhoeffer and for Barth as well, its chief menace.

Bonhoeffer's resistance, then, was in the strictest sense resistance against ideology. But it was incumbent upon him to spell out the alternative to ideology in a "world come of age". Thus he arrived, once again influenced by the thinking of Barth, at the notion, most revolutionary for a Christian theologian, of a "non-religious Christianity": "we are moving", he wrote from jail to Bethge, in 1944, "towards a completely religiousless time", in which God, as he saw Him, is not almighty God but, like men, embattled and suffering. It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, he argued, but rather participation in the suffering of God. As against ideological action, then, Bonhoeffer posited "responsible action" which meant affirmation of the world come of age and compassion with the suffering God.

Ultimately Bonhoeffer's responsible action, in view of religion's retreat, upon the intensification of faith. Thus he could bring the distant God back into the world and reconcile conspiracy with his ministry: these two became the pillars of his theology. The ministry could be reconfirmed by the rediscovery of God on the cross. Conspiracy, while neither condoned by the Church nor understood even by some, like Karl Barth, could be justified as part of the drama of sin and forgiveness; in the last analysis Bonhoeffer found his way into martyrdom as a sinner who as such stands before God and abandons himself to His grace.

No doubt Dietrich Bonhoeffer's religious interpretation of Christianity and specifically his affirmation of the here and now, even at the risk of sinfulness, came very close to Lutheran heresy. But might it not also be seen as an opening wedge for a theology designed for the modern world, for, in the most literal sense, a theology of crisis?

A new German Bonhoeffer edition is now in the making. The spade-work for studies of the German theologian has already been done by Eberhard Bethge, who has edited the six-volume set of the first edition (*Gesammelte Schriften* I-VI, Munich, 1958-74). Meanwhile, many more texts have been unearthed which, projected to fill sixteen volumes, will no doubt offer renewed incentive for the study of Bonhoeffer. The first two volumes here cover appeared so far and under review here cover his early life (Volume Nine) and work (Volume One). While providing no strikingly new insights beyond those given in Bethge's magisterial biography, they accentuate certain aspects of Bonhoeffer's formative years and moreover allow us to see the origins of some of his new theological thinking in his neophyte years. The new edition, however, oddly reticent about

Above all these volumes show that there was nothing striking about the life of young Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was neither a rebel nor a zealot. "There must be certitudes in life", Bonhoeffer let one of the characters say in the drama fragment written in prison in 1943. Coming from an established patrician family gave him a distinct sense of certitudes. Knowing even early on, well before the Nazis came to power, that he was heading for a time of troubles, he wrote to his parents about everyday experiences like potato-picking, museum visits, excursions and journeys. And the sixteen-year-old boy remarked that the murder of Walter Rathenau, which took place a stone's throw away from the Bonhoeffer home in Grunewald, was perpetrated by a "swinish gang of right-wing bolsheviks". His decision to study theology, made when he was thirteen years old, was not a matter of conversion. In a way, of course, he was following in the footsteps of his maternal ancestors, the von Hases; but chiefly he chose his calling out of an eagerness to explore higher knowledge. And in the course of time he moved into the orbit of the Sermon on the Mount, he no less became preoccupied with testing its limits - that is at the point "where in the course of its fulfillment evil is not overcome but furthered". From early on, it can be said, Bonhoeffer's life was a preparation for discipleship as well as for resistance against evil.

Sanctorum Communio, the dissertation Bonhoeffer completed in 1927, had many merits of a beginner's work. Written in an excessively heavy and convoluted style, it did not make much of a splash at the time; it appeared in print, subsidized by public and family funds, in 1930 without eliciting much response in the scholarly literature. Only after the Second World War and since the publication of *Letters and Papers from Prison* (Munich, 1951; New York, 1953) have theologians begun to pay attention to the work which, they came to see, contained the seeds of the innovative proposi-

The conscience of a nation

Michael Butler

HEINRICH BÖLL
Die Fähigkeit zu trauern: Schriften und Reden
1983-1985
318 pp. 38977 061 4. DM 29.80.
GABRIELE HOFFMANN
Heinrich Böll: Eine Biographie
288 pp. 38977 103 3. DM 29.80.
Bornheim - Merten: Lamuv.

Born in Wilhelmine Germany, growing up in the Weimar Republic, schooled in the Third Reich and surviving to become the Federal Republic's most relentless critic, Heinrich Böll's life can be seen as a paradigm of the bleak history of twentieth-century Germany.

The final collection of speeches and essays from the last two years of his life reveals an undiminished vigour, an appetite for polemic and a concern for his country and its future. Although he hated the label, Böll functioned as "the conscience of the nation" in that he persistently attacked public hypocrisy and his fellow countrymen's propensity for selective amnesia about the past. "An individual, a society without memory is a sick individual, a sick society", he comments.

Böll's unwelcome reminders of darker continuities were closely associated with his sympathy for contemporary victims: political refugees, the unemployed, dissidents and non-conformists of all kinds. His final writings, gathered in *Die Fähigkeit zu trauern*, are full of a sense of moral outrage and a humane scepticism towards authority which characterized his work from its beginnings in the immediate post-war years.

Gabriela Hoffmann's biography provides a useful companion volume to these occasional pieces. First published in 1977, it has now been brought up to date at the invitation of Lamuv Verlag, the publishing house founded by Böll's son René. The strength of the book lies in its sobriety of tone and uncluttered language. Hoffmann allows the facts to speak for themselves and offers little interpretation of the work itself. Although she had access to private papers, she is, however, oddly reticent about

tions that Bonhoeffer was to develop in captivity. His "dogmatic inquiry into the sociology of the Church" projected the sociological reality of the Church as it had been elaborated by Ernst Troeltsch against the revelatory sociology as outlined by Karl Barth. Each in his way helped Bonhoeffer to sharpen his awareness of the dimensions of *communio*. But both had to be overcome: Troeltsch for his all-too-concrete understanding of the Church, Barth for his all-too-grim removal of God from the scene of the earth. Even in its *status corruptissimus* the world of Adam, Bonhoeffer argued, could partake in the world of Christ, just as the world of Christ was conditioned by the world of Adam. The communion of sinners and that of the saints thus were linked through Christ and His grace. The hidden God had after all revealed himself to men. And when the world had gone up once again in flames and the genius of God's children had been perverted into an orgy of brutality, God was found weeping and suffering, not almighty but weak and powerless in the world. From Basel finally, in 1955, Karl Barth paid his "deepest respect" to Bonhoeffer's vision in his *Sanctorum Communio*: would he, Barth, ever, from his place and in his own language, be able to express himself as powerfully as "that young man did then"?

Bonhoeffer's life and theology were of one piece. His short life was a clear statement of sanity and serenity, of independence and courage. His theology from the very start carried the seeds of rebellion; but it was rebellion essentially aimed at recovering the Lutheran tradition which indeed had justified "suffering disobedience", and at fitting it for a setting of manifest and unprecedented princely justice. And if after all there is no place for Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life among the Lives of Saints, he will nevertheless go down in history as one of the great human beings of our century and as one of its pioneering theologians on what Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker has called the "journey towards reality".

her subject. She is able to throw light on numerous biographical details which have been woven into Böll's fiction, but the writer himself remains mysteriously vague. Nevertheless, Hoffmann succeeds in bringing out Böll's central concern: the abject failure of State, Church and Home to protect the individual against the evil of Fascism.

The continual need to defend the individual and the family fired both Böll's creative energy and his trenchant criticism of politicians and journalists who seemed to care for neither. His solidarity with the young and the disadvantaged, his refusal to indulge in cold-war politics and his more recent presence at mass demonstrations in the Federal Republic against nuclear weapons brought him much public ridicule and detestation. The award of the Nobel Prize in 1972 was greeted in some quarters with undisguised dismay, and as recently as 1983 Böll was invited by the Kulturminister of Baden-Württemberg to consider emigration.

Hoffmann delineates this outward structure with careful honesty, but her method does not allow her to penetrate the complexities of this extraordinary man. However, we are given a glimpse of the intensely private individual behind the public person through the inclusion of a small selection of letters, dating mainly from the war years when Böll was shipped all over Europe as a hapless private in Hitler's *Wehrmacht*. These letters home to his mother and wife hint at a dark melancholy which is rarely encountered so directly in the writer's subsequent fiction. The loss of personality under barracks-room pressure, the conscript's hatred of an obtuse and arrogant authority, the fear and boredom of modern warfare all emerge surprisingly clearly, in view of military censorship. Only religious faith and love of family sustained him through such organized idiosyncrasy.

Since Heinrich Böll's death in 1985, seven schools and one of the finest squares in his native city of Cologne have been named after him. Yet there can have been few writers who have attracted in their lifetime more general odium. To explain this intriguing paradox would tax the combined ingenuity of the politicians and other myth-makers assiduously contributing to the current junketings in Berlin.

Beyond the stereotype

Peter Graves

JOHN ARDAGH
Germany and the Germans: An anatomy of society today
478pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.95.
0241 121167

At the height of the Second World War a Noël Coward song was urging, "Don't let's be beautiful to the Germans". The sarcasm was unmistakable, but Germany even in its impressive post-war renaissance is not the most obviously lovable of nations. According to the stereotypes, the French have flair, the Italians style, the Americans exuberance and the British an engaging eccentricity. The Germans by contrast are perceived as awesomely efficient, but also as conformist and humourless. So when John Ardagh, self-confessed Francophile and author of some excellent books on France, left his first love to immerse himself in things German, he was taking on rather more forbidding fare. His reward was greater than he can have imagined, for his preparatory work brought him across one Katharine Schmitz, who became his research assistant and his wife, and her influence is evident in the understanding with which he writes.

Although it shares part of its title with Walter Laqueur's *Germany Today* (1985) and the rest with Gordon Craig's *The Germans* (1982), Ardagh's book is quite distinctive. Un-

like Craig, who sets his portrait very firmly in the context of German history since the Middle Ages, Ardagh rarely refers to events before 1945 and provides only a brief post-war historical survey. Instead, he opts for a snapshot of contemporary Germany from every conceivable angle. To this respect *Germany and the Germans* is closer to Laqueur's treatment, except that Ardagh's is much wider-ranging and perhaps is written with greater sympathy for its subject. Not that its author is in any sense dewy-eyed, but he is extremely perceptive and well informed. From a vast storehouse of detail he dispenses facts and statistics with authority and largesse: we are taken on a tour of the major West German cities, inspect the federal structure of government, observe the Germans at work (though their prodigious output in the 1950s and 60s was surely less "a kind of instinctive act of expiation for the evil of the war and of Nazism" than a frenetic attempt at forgetfulness), we examine rural existence, the feintly religious, leisure, diet, education, immigrants, the arts, the media and more besides. All German life is there, in formidable array.

The book concentrates on the Federal Republic, but Ardagh also devotes a lengthy chapter to the German Democratic Republic. Here too he is the sensitive observer rather than the historian or political analyst, to an extent that even the founder of the state's ideology, Germany's most influential son, Karl Marx, is barely mentioned. But his compensation he conveys most vividly: the flavour of

"what it is like to live in the GDR", despite the few minor errors that have crept in. One does not, for instance, need "Western contexts" in order to obtain jeans, as they are also on sale in East Germany (albeit in variable quality). Christa Wolf, the GDR's leading writer, is not "more concerned with personal than public themes": her last book, *Kassandra* (1983), was censored precisely because it dealt openly with the issue of nuclear weapons (and she is about to publish a work on Chernobyl). And the anorak badges worn in the unofficial Peace Movement and banned by the régime so humiliated in 1982 (depicted, not the Western CND symbol, but (height of irony) the "swords into ploughshares" statue presented to the United Nations by the Soviet Union. This last incident typifies the atmosphere of the GDR. The state is by no means as bad as it might be, and Ardagh very fairly points to some of its progressive social legislation. But at the same time, with its authoritarian style, it displays the least attractive side of German attachment to orderliness and efficiency.

This is where Ardagh is at his best; not so much when he is telling us the number of cows in the average West German dairy herd (fifteen) or the annual per capita consumption of potatoes in the Federal Republic (eighty-six kilos), but when the snapshot becomes an X-ray and he penetrates to attitudes, motives and tendencies. Despite the problems with generalizing about national character, many of his observations will strike a chord with anyone

John Ardagh

Into the arms of Hitler

David Blackburn

HANS SPEIER
German White-Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler
208pp. Yale University Press. £19.95.
0300 037015
THOMAS CHILDERS (Editor)
The Formation of the Nazi Constituency, 1919-1933
263pp. Croom Helm. £25.
07099 34599
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£29.75.
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Weimar Germany
230pp. Macmillan. £29.50.
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RICHARD J. EVANS and DICK GEARY (Editors)
The German Unemployed: Experiences and
consequences of mass unemployment from the
Weimar Republic to the Third Reich
314pp. Croom Helm. £29.95.
07099 09411

In the German national elections of July 1932 the Nazis won 37.3 per cent of the popular vote, a striking achievement in the multi-party Weimar political system. It was not in itself enough to put Hitler into power. To get a full picture of why he became chancellor six months later we need to look also at the manoeuvrings of élites and at what was happening in the streets as well as the polling stations. But if the Nazi seizure of power cannot be explained by electoral support alone, it cannot be adequately explained without it. The books considered here add much to our knowledge of whom the Nazis mobilized and how they managed it.

It has long been recognized that they were least successful among Catholics and the organized working class (whether Social-Democratic or Communist), who had strong political loyalties. In broad terms, Nazi support was to be found among non-proletarian Protestants, a key group among whom was the growing army of white-collar workers analysed by Hans Speier. The German original of *German White-Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler* was on the verge of publication in 1933, when it

fell foul of Nazi censorship. Eventually published in Germany ten years ago, the full text now appears in English for the first time.

Speier's account is a classic, to set beside Kracauer's *Die Angestellten*, illuminating the occupational, social and political worlds of white-collar workers. He brings detailed understanding and sympathy to those who inhabited the mechanized offices of the 1920s, discussing with an almost Weberian intensity the debasing effects of the typewriter, calculator and addressograph, and the increasingly specialized functions that accompanied their introduction. As he shows, the creation of mundane jobs encouraged the recruitment of workers' children and women to fill them. But despite white-collar flirtations with socialism in the aftermath of the 1918 revolution, and the continuing allegiance of around a quarter of such workers to the left-wing Afa-Bund, most resisted the idea that they formed a white-collar proletariat. Instead, they prized their educational superiority, cultivated distinctive patterns of cultural consumption made possible by delayed marriage and restricted families, and stressed their privileges vis-à-vis manual workers (monthly payment, a separate insurance scheme, the right to be called *Herr Mueller*). The threatened loss or erosion of these privileges drove many to the right, towards the radical-nationalist politics of the *Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband* (German National League of Commercial Employees) and ultimately into the arms of the Nazis. In 1933 white-collar workers constituted just over a fifth of all NSDAP members, twice their share of the labour force.

Speier's arguments have often resurfaced among historians who stress the support Hitler gained among the lower middle class more generally. The Nazis were undeniably successful in appealing to the anxieties and resentments of those such as craftsmen and shopkeepers, the little men who felt themselves squeezed between big capital and organized labour and blamed the Weimar Republic for their problems. This support, like Nazi electoral popularity with the peasantry, is evident from many of the valuable essays in *The Formation of the Nazi Constituency, 1919-1933*, edited by Thomas Childers. As Childers rightly notes, however, recent research has broadened the picture, particularly in emphasizing the adherence of more substantial bourgeois groups to the Nazis.

His contributors underline the point. In an excellent local study of Bavarian Swabia,

Zdenek Zofka refers to the over-representation of civil servants in rural party branches, especially schoolteachers and forestry officials. Jane Caplan also deals sensitively with the Nazi appeal to civil servants, while Michael Kater offers a good account of the Nazi Physicians' League as a response to the "crisis of medicine" in the 1920s. What emerges from these accounts – as it does from Speier's discussion of academically educated technicians – is the Nazi appeal, not only to status anxiety and nostalgia, but to the technocratic ambitions of many professionals and public servants.

One of the most attractive features of this collection is the variety of approaches with which the contributors depict the Nazis working to mobilize their support. Both Detlef Mühlberger and Michaela Richter provide welcome local studies of what the latter calls the Nazis' "perpetual campaigning" – the meetings, posters, dances, slide-shows, door-to-door canvassing, direct mailing. From a rather different angle, Richard Bessel argues subtly and convincingly that Nazi violence was itself a form of propaganda. While it satisfied younger activists (especially the Brownshirt SA) and generated a sense of dynamism, it was also reassuring to more mainstream, conservative sentiment. For frontal assaults on the state were avoided, while the selective violence against the left was presented as a defensive struggle to preserve German culture against the "Marxist Blood Rabble-Rousers". Two notes prominently sounded in Bessel's essay are heard in other chapters. One is the attention paid to the deft Nazi use of language, explored by Caplan with particular insight. The other is the emphasis on the party's potent combination punch, offering to get things done, yet working with the grain of everyday concerns and established social structures. Zofka is especially impressive on the importance of support for the Nazis from influential figures like local mayors and the chairmen of ex-servicemen's associations.

These are also central themes of Rudy Koshar's essay, and of his thoughtful new monograph. *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism* deals with Marburg, a small university-dominated town in which those most receptive to Nazi promises were present in disproportionate numbers – academics, students, tradesmen and officials. Koshar's focus is not on occupational groups as such, but on the social and political life of the town and the opportunities it presented for Nazi penetration. One of his major concerns is to examine a tradition of bourgeois "apoliticism" that was in fact suspicious of mass politics and interest-groups, vigorously anti-socialist, and looked to the nation and the State as embodiments of a higher political morality. This may sound like another castigation of the familiar "unpolitical German". Koshar's originality lies in having uncoupled this idea from its normal corollary, namely the alleged civic inertness of bourgeois Germans by comparison with their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Building on recent work that has emphasized the importance of voluntary associations in Germany, he has imaginatively reconstructed a "patterned network" of social life through an examination of choral societies, sports clubs, student fraternities and professional associations, as well as organizations devoted to sociability. This was where apolitical habits of thought were nurtured and articulated among Marburg's broad middle classes. But the same pattern applied fragmentarily at the political level, and Koshar argues that there was a growing asymmetry between bourgeois social strength and political weakness that reached crisis-point at the end of the Weimar Republic. The Nazis squared this circle. They spoke the language of apoliticism, and many individual party members were active in local associations. At the same time, the Nazis promised to realize nationalist and anti-socialist aspirations in the political sphere by replacing the splintered bourgeois parties. Koshar's is a dense and demanding book, one that combines close attention to the fabric of local life with theoretical ambition. It will be reflected on for years to come.

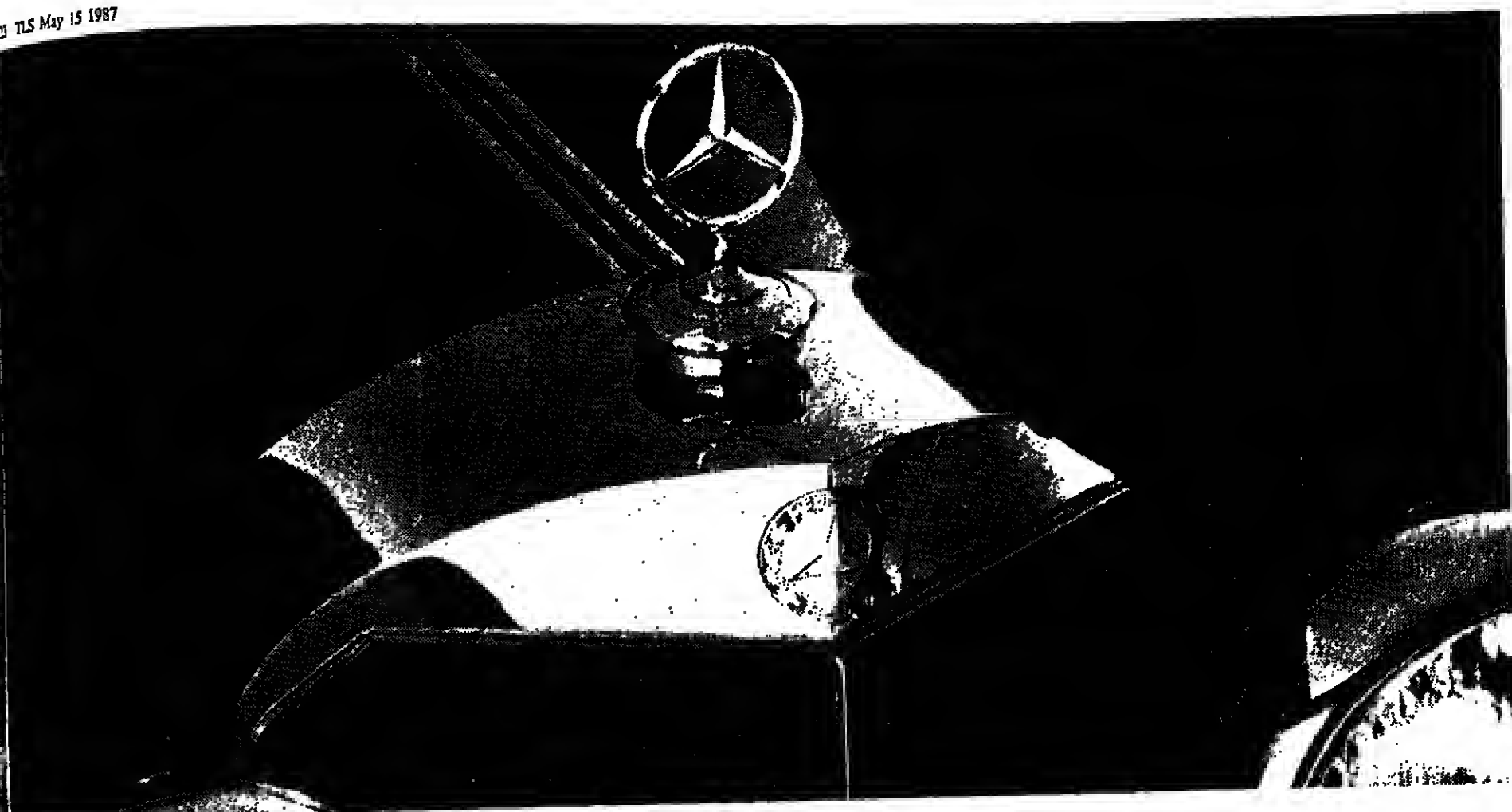
Marburg's occupational structure spared it the full impact of the mass unemployment that, by 1932, stood officially at 6 million and in reality at rather more than one to three of the labour force. Two new collections of essays

this on Nazi fortunes. Many of the essays bring different kinds of evidence to confirm Jürgen Falter's statistical demonstration in *Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany* that the great rise in Nazi electoral support between 1928 and 1932 was based on the unemployed themselves. It is true that there were unemployed professionals and white-collar workers (over half a million by 1932) who were drawn to the party, but the great majority of unemployed were manual workers and – with some important exceptions – the Nazis gained little support from them. As Dick Geary puts it, they were best where unemployment was least, and in the great industrial centres where the numbers of jobless were greatest. But the indirect effects of unemployment were enormous. Several of the authors, in both volumes, are very good on by-products of youth unemployment with which we are all too familiar: social and family dislocation, rising criminality, the stimulus given to youth gangs (*Cliqueurs*), the formed part of a desperate subculture, the created a spectre of lawlessness and social integration that frightened many, and helped to explain the high number of older first-time voters the Nazis persuaded to the polls. At a different level, mass unemployment depressed purchasing power, severely hitting peasant food producers and small tradesmen, and sharpening class antagonisms. Erich Rosenhaft's outstanding contribution to *The German Unemployed* indicates what this could mean in the neighbourhood: shopkeepers outraged by "proletarian shopping trips", conflicts between working-class tenants and petty-bourgeois landlords, publicans whose custom declined and left them grateful for the money brought in by Brownshirts seeking a wedge of "red" territory.

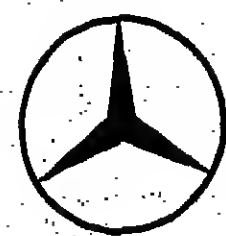
These volumes contribute finally to our understanding of why working-class resistance to Nazism was unsuccessful. Most obviously, any possibility of a general strike was undermined when half of all trade-union members were unemployed and a further quarter on short time. The extent to which employed labour was cowed is illustrated by essays that stress the unwillingness of workers with jobs to report sick, a finding confirmed from the opposite end by Kater's article on doctors in the Stachura volume. The social and political pattern of unemployment in late Weimar also served to reinforce the very real divisions in the German working class. This is an area on which a number of contributions to *The German Unemployed* – by Geary himself, Elizabeth Harvey, Detlev Peukert, Eve Rosenhaft, Anthony McElligott – throw a particularly enlightening light. The Social Democrats represented workers who were not only older and better housed, but more likely to have kept their jobs – often at the expense of younger workers. At municipal level, where the State and the unemployed came increasingly into conflict, the SPD often presided unhappily over the dismantling of Weimar welfare. The Communists, by contrast, were the party of the unemployed, who made up perhaps 85 per cent of its membership in the depth of the depression. The KPD was the great political beneficiary of youthful working-class hostility to the cuts in benefits and eligibility, the "voluntary" labour service and cosmetic training schemes which these authors so devastatingly analyse. The young worker, loosely organized by the Communists, who vented his frustration on the Social-Democratic welfare clerk, was a symbol of the tragic distance between the parties. It was the Nazis who benefited from these divisions, as they did in so many indirect ways from the impact of mass unemployment.

Populaten, Labour and Migration in the 19th and 20th Century Germany (200pp. Leamington Spa: Berg. £15. 0 85496 503 3), edited by Klaus J. Bade, which is based on a series of seminars held under the auspices of St Antony's College, Oxford, brings together studies from the fields of historical demography, labour market and migration research. Among the essays in the volume are "Labour, Migration and the State: Germany from the Late 19th Century to the Onset of the Great Depression" by Klaus J. Bade and "German Transatlantic Migration from the Early 19th Century to the Outbreak of World War II" by Richard R. Doeber.

TLS May 15 1987



There are signs that become a symbol.



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public sector". John's death, it appears, is connected in the "heterocosmic affirmation" (poem) – though not in the poet's mind – with those of Marat, Robespierre, John Taylor and Ralsley Culvert; Beaumont's sublime sea, needless to say, is the Revolutionary deluge. The poet cannot himself make such connections, Levinson argues, because "to do so would be to name the contradiction which organized his culture and his particular mode of insertion/implication in that culture". This is not a theoretical book, but a pretentious one. It claims kinship with the work of Althusser, Jameson, Macherey, but succeeds only in making biographical speculations that cannot be disproved, however improbable they may be.

New Historicism has the aim of returning to contexts and social determinants, without the positivism that used to go with them. It is pragmatic, as much as it is anything; and its effect (predictably) is to replace a closed system which is apolitical with a political system which is closed. The insights of historical interpretation, which are in Hamilton illuminating (if problematic) are in Levinson merely reductive. Perversely, the Wordsworth who emerges from her study is political despite, not because of, his active involvement in the politics of his day. We are asked to see ideology as "re-

pressed", when staring us in the face is the poet who denounced the Bishop of Landaff in 1793, sent *Lyrical Ballads* to Fox in 1801 (and wrote him an epitaph in 1806), then entered the fray as a pamphleteer in 1809 (*The Convention of Cintra*), 1818 (over the Westmorland election) and 1835 (Postscript to "Yarrow Revisited"). Wordsworth was throughout his life a political thinker.

"The Romantic poets", Levinson argues in her second book *The Romantic Fragment Poem*, "were most forcefully and eloquently political in their production of designedly apolitical, or escapist forms, such as the Fragment Poem." The fragment announces itself as artless and incomplete (thereby pre-empting criticism from the society on whose good opinion it depends), while at the same time transcending the values of that society. This duplicity is what has ensured its acceptance. It developed, we are told, during the Romantic era as a genre in its own right, gradually establishing authorial intentions and readerly expectations. More recently it has emerged as "the acme of enlightened literary production".

Intent on seeing gaps in composition, uncompleted drafts, indecisiveness of all kinds, as ironic (and deliberate), Levinson supposes a Modernist awareness in the writers she consid-

ers. An obedient readership, meanwhile, equipped with sophisticated "reception protocols", behaves exactly as it ought. Her procedure, as before, is an uneasy hybrid. She grafts historical analysis of contemporary reviews on to not-quite-deconstructive interpretation of the poems themselves, thus keeping a foot in both camps while refusing the rigour of either.

"Nutting", read as a true fragment, is a determinate form that conceals its authoritarian and expedient appropriation of historical material by formally deferring to the existential continuum which ostensibly gives shape and meaning to the discourse.

Whatever else it might be, "Nutting" is clearly, as Jean Hagstrum reminds us in *The Romantic Body*, a poem about rape. Wordsworth's language insists on sexuality: the hazels "tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung", but still "a virgin scene"; the boy-poet, "Voluptuous, fearless of a rival"; eyeing the banquet; the "crash and merciless ravage" as he drags down branch and bough, leaving the nook "deformed and sullied". Hagstrum's concern is with sex, not sexual (or textual) politics, so commentary thus far remains within the poet's own terms. More surprising is his reading of the final lines:

Wordsworth is far from turning away from all sexual contact, which it is one purpose in his verse to show can be decent and tender. "Touch", he tells his sister: "with gentle hand," of course; but "touch", Dorothy, "touch!"

It is typical of the book as a whole to play down disturbance, and to present sex in the most domestic way. The Wordsworth who emerges is a welcome revision of Shelley's "solemn and

unsexual man"; but the more troubled sides of his psyche remain unexplored.

If *The Romantic Body* goes out of its way to simplify problems, it is partly as a bid to reclaim the Romantics from psychoanalysis and deconstruction. Its author, "wedded to the belief that the matrix of poetry is life-experience, rather than antecedent language and form", is experiential in approach throughout. Reading Keats's portrayal of Lamia as "fairly complex, and profoundly autobiographical", may give us a rather scaly Emily Brontë; but the intention is harmless enough. Hagstrum wishes to bring Romantic love back down to earth – to refuse the allegorization imposed on, and the transcendence normally associated with, Romantic claims. Where Keats is concerned, the project is creditable; his poetry at once "chthonizes" love and leaves criticism unrestrained. But for Blake, sex can never be simply sex. It is the result and the perpetuation of the fall into division, and thus used, but their speed under oar and sail, the limitations of their oar-systems and their sea-keeping qualities were not specifically discussed. Even their successors, the quadriremes and quinqueremes of the Hellenistic and Roman navies, were largely taken for granted, although that was a era of technical treatises.

If the strictly literary evidence is thin, that of inscriptions and representations on sculpture and vases, though better, is still frustratingly patchy. The results are reflected in the vagueness of nearly all modern historical accounts of ancient marine matters. Now, thanks largely to the lifelong devotion of J. L. Morrison, many of the problems are approaching solution, and in a particularly satisfying and dramatic way. *The Athenian Trireme* by him and his naval-architect collaborator, J. F. Coates, presents a readable, accurate and well-organized survey of the ancient evidence, from the Late Bronze Age to the third century ac, as well as a detailed account of the full-sized replica that is about to be launched in Greece and is being prepared for sea-trials in the sheltered waters off Poros this August. The book provides the justification for many of the details of the replica, the practical experience of building which (and the models and "Trial Piece" that preceded it) has tested and refined many of the theoretical inferences to be found in the book. Even *The Times* Education Correspondent who recently characterized much of the production of the Oxford University Press as "obscure monographs" might be interested in the present volume, published by the no less prestigious Cambridge house. "Obscure monographs" are the medium of humane scholarship, which is in danger of foundering under the gross weight of materialism, politics and public inertia; yet the present one will be judged by an experiment which will at worst be a minor news sensation and at best lead to a keener understanding of the practical side of the ancient world – a side few can resist.

Mr Morrison, a well-known Cambridge classical scholar (with an interval at Durham), contributed his first article on the trireme to *The Mirror* in 1941. His father had by then made a model, illustrated in the book, to support the main Morrisonian conviction that the oars in a three-level ship could all be of the same length and still work effectively. His continued interest in naval matters led to *Greek Oared Ships*, with R. T. Williams (Cambridge 1968). In 1981 he invited Coates, formerly Chief Naval Architect to the Ministry of Defence, to collaborate in a further volume designed to clear up engineering problems in the design of large oared ships. The idea of reconstructing a trireme rapidly took over, and led to the founding of the Trireme Trust and the building of a model of the whole ship and a mock-up of the oar-system. Meanwhile, the Greek Navy and Maritime Museum, with the Ministry of Culture and National Tourist Office, had become interested, and the decision was taken to build the replica in Greece. First a full-scale, full-sized section, the Trial Piece, was built and seen in action at Herley in 1983. All of which demonstrates the systematic and careful preparations of Morrison, Coates and others, the availability of financial backers for this sort of project, and not least the commitment of the Greeks.

The origin of the trireme (the Greek word

Barn

It is a ruined cowhouse, an out-and-outhouse, no roof or glass, the cleansed laths like a harp on which the wind plays out its elegies, a cattle's come-to-come to nothing at all.

Grainy sparrows bathe in the dust bowl of its forecourt or fly up in the loft, an attic studio as should be, all air and space and unobstructed light.

While below, gone to ground under a rafter, you can see the coffin-blocks of hay, some still tightly parcelled in their bale-string, some reseeded with a scalping of grass.

Often, walking past, I've wondered who the owner was and did he drive the Wolseley parked out back, thistles in its headlights and a mesh of brambles for a rad.

Was he a Tovell or Kett, whose wife ran off or herd got sick and ruined him, the weight of which he carried here one morning and fastened to the roofbeam with a rope?

No, something more banal, plain as this cat hiding out in a tractor-rut, its fur blown back like the wheat engrossing it, as a long gust stirs the mustard slurry

of the rapefields, then skirts towards the air-balloon floating the logo of a Little Chef, then off past gleaming hippopon and silo-towers, off through the barracks of a turkey-farm,

off, off, to Lowestoft and Felixstowe, where homes rise like bread out of breezeblocks and raw container-ships unload the software of tomorrow, which I believe in,

or pretend I do; trying not to hear what these lath songs say about purpose giving out, how everything fails us but the certainty of falling, if not now, then in the end.

BLAKE MORRISON

Rowing into battle

G. S. Kirk

J. L. MORRISON and J. F. COATES
The Athenian Trireme: The history and reconstruction of an Ancient Greek warship
266pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50 (paperback, £7.95).

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F. MEIJER
A History of Seafaring in the Classical World
236pp. Croom Helm. £25.
0709 3565 X

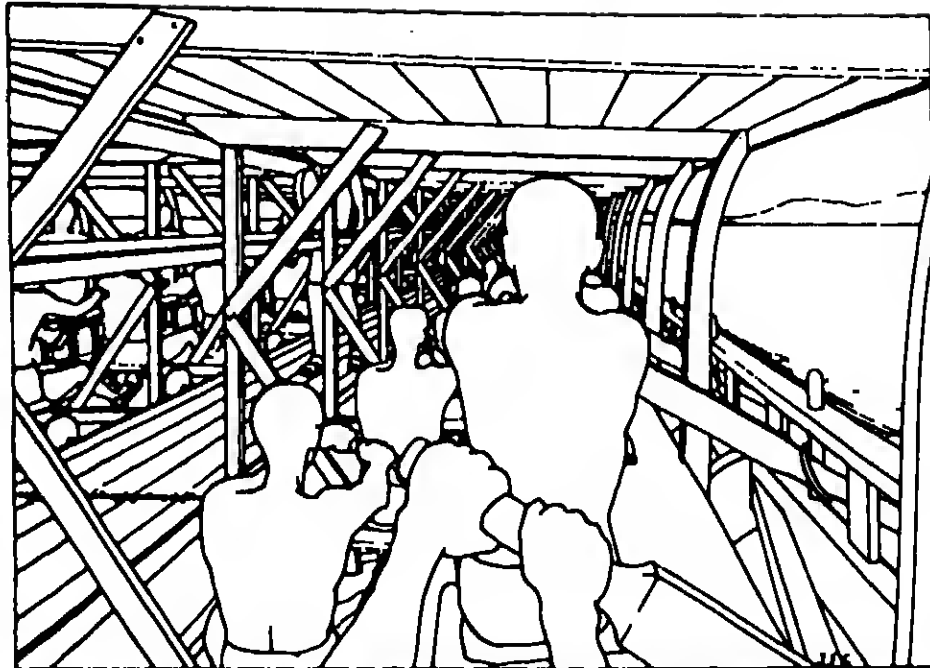
The shape, construction and performance of the most important warships in history, the Greek trireme, have never been properly known. The ships were so familiar that no writer in antiquity needed to describe them in detail. Historians, especially Herodotus and Thucydides, described some of the battles in which they were involved and the tactics they used, but their speed under oar and sail, the limitations of their oar-systems and their sea-keeping qualities were not specifically discussed. Even their successors, the quadriremes and quinqueremes of the Hellenistic and Roman navies, were largely taken for granted, although that was a era of technical treatises.

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The origin of the trireme (the Greek word



A drawing of the reconstructed trireme – a thranite oarsman's view – taken from *The Athenian Trireme* by J. L. Morrison and J. F. Coates, reviewed on this page.

was *trieres*, literally "three-fitted") remains questionable. According to Thucydides 1.13, 2-3 the Corinthians were said to have initiated modern trends in ship-design; the first triremes in Greece were built in Coriothi; and Ameinocles, a Corinthian ship-builder, built four triremes for the Samians at a date equivalent to 650 ac or shortly before. Yet the Phoenicians had long been a force in Mediterranean seafaring. They were recognized as innovators in ship-design, and provided formidable warships and crews for the Persians throughout the classical era. It seems probable, therefore, that they had a hand in the invention of three-level ships – certainly in that of the two-level ones that were their natural precursors.

Longships with low freeboard and many rowers, as well as a large square sail, were known from the Bronze Age on, and were copiously but schematically illustrated on vases of the Geometric period, chiefly in the eighth century ac. The standard fast ship before the trireme was the penteconter (or -er), the fifty-oared ship with twenty-five rowers each side, and that remained in use long after 650 ac; for example Herodotus 1.164, 3 relates that in 540 the Phoenicians left for Corsica *en masse*, under Persian pressure, in their penteconters. Their ships had rams, were warships, and were soon in action against the Etruscans and Carthaginians. By this time the Greeks were certainly building two-level ships, displayed on black-figure vases from around 550 ac. Whether the "apparent" two-level ship of almost two centuries earlier, on a Theban bowl in the British Museum, is really so remains doubtful, since Geometric artists tended to show further objects (in this case the "upper" row of oarsmen) as above nearer ones. In any event an Assyrian two-level ship is unambiguously depicted operating at Tyre in 701 ac.

The invention of the two-level ship must have been the real breakthrough, since it enabled almost double the oar-power to be fitted into a hull of fixed length. The single-level penteconter was already a long and narrow affair which could not be stretched without creating weakness and instability. In the two-level ship the upper rank of oarsmen are seen rowing over the gunwale, the lower rank through oar-ports in the ship's side. All that was needed to make a trireme was the addition of an upper rank of rowers – but what technical problems that must have entailed! For centuries, scholars allowed themselves to be distracted by those problems into seeking other explanations for the triple system, based on the design of Renaissance galleys: either that there were groups of three oars, each rowed by an oarsman sitting alongside the other two (the Venetian *alla sensile* system); or that the loom of each oar was pulled by three (or more) oarsmen *a scolorio*, as in the Venetian quadriremes which fought at Lepanto in 1571. The former system is disproved for the trireme by fourth century ac naval inventories from Piræus, which show that apart oars carried in triremes were all of the same, or very nearly the same, length; the latter by Thucydides 2.93, 2, where the crews of forty Corinthian warships are sent by foot across the Isthmus,

each carrying his own oar, cushion and thole-strap.

In any case, two bits of ancient evidence, even apart from the several surviving depictions of two-level ships, speak quite clearly for the trireme as a multi-level construction. First, Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1074f, envisages a row of the state trireme *Poraios* "farting in the face of the *tholamias* [ie, an oarsman in the hold] and excreting on his mess-mate", which definitely entails one rower as below another, specifically in a trireme. Second, the Lenormant relief, found on the Athenian Acropolis and published in 1859, is a battered fragment from the end of the fifth century ac which shows part of a ship's side with oars emerging at three levels. That still leaves the problem of how the extra oarsmen were fitted into such a narrow hull – the foundations of the triremes at Zea harbour in Piræus show a clear space 6 metres wide and up to 37 metres long, giving a maximum beam of no more than 5½ metres. The answer is by means of the outrigger, *parexelesia* in Greek, which is mentioned in two passages of Thucydides, suggested in depictions of Hellenistic and Roman multi-level ships.

Generations of scholars have worked on these problems, but Morrison has pulled the arguments together and, with the help of Coates above all, introduced refinements which make a three-level oar-system really plausible for the first time. Many of the niceties of ship-construction, such as the scarfing of the keel and the tenons by which the strokes are fitted to it, have been worked out in advance, partly with the help of the wrecks of ancient merchant-ships – triremes themselves were too light and buoyant to sink completely and therefore have not survived. The operation of the undergirds or *hypozomata*, longitudinal cables inside the ship to prevent hogging, will be of particular interest. All are described in detail by Coates, whose clear and elegant line-drawings are an added pleasure.

An important part of the book concerns ancient accounts of triremes in action, and the naval battles of Artemisium and Salamis in the Persian war, and Sybota, Naupactus, Syracuse, Cyzicus and others in the Peloponnesian war, are discussed in detail. What emerges is a more coherent description of the classic manoeuvres of encirclement and breakthrough than can be found elsewhere, a new emphasis on the crucial role of the fastest ships (often, those that had been afloat least), and a reasoned demonstration of the importance of land-based forces for ancient naval movements, as well as of the high level of training required for oarsmen in the use of the ram and the performance of complicated manoeuvres in confined spaces. On all these matters the performance of the replica will have much to contribute.

The Athenian Trireme is required reading for anyone interested in the forthcoming sea-trials; it can usefully be supplemented by Fik Meijer's *A History of Seafaring in the Classical World*, which covers some of the same ground in its first half, inevitably less thoroughly, but

extends the enquiry to the polyremes (where oar-systems differed once again) of the late fourth century ac down into Roman times. Dr Meijer is a historian with a gift for synthesis and bold speculation; occasionally he slips over details (for example Phormio's fleet did not drop anchor when it fell back on Naupactus; that would have ensured disaster), but is especially full on the Syracuse campaign, which initiated the decline of Athenian sea-power. His book will remain useful, but is inevitably overshadowed for the time being by the launching of the replica.

The first trials will be exciting: this is a beautiful-looking boat, it is of some size, and should be very fast, for short bursts, under oar. Obviously stability will need to be thoroughly tested before the full complement of 170 oarsmen (the cream of British rowing clubs) gets into action; even then an instinctive feeling for the nearest exit will be an asset. Hazards will persist as the ship tries out its complicated outrage in real waves; Coates has calculated that it will heel seven degrees under mainsail alone in a steady beam wind of fourteen knots, and will flood through the upper oar-ports at twenty-one degrees. Fourteen knots is nothing by Aegean standards, even in midsummer; as for rolling in waves and its effect on oar-propulsion, Coates seems to predict, not surprisingly, that even a slight heel in relation to wave-surface will be difficult to manage. There is little in the ancient sources to suggest that triremes were not good seaboats; that is surprising, but the replica may show us how it was done. Other tasks will remain, although it presumably cannot be risked in serious beaching trials and facing unfavourable weather at anchor and ashore. If the ship is as good as the book, it will be doing well.

Taras: its history and coinage by George C. Brauer, Jr (231pp. New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas. \$55. 0 89241 377 8) is an account of this Greek colony from its foundation, traditionally dated to 706 ac, to its "afterlife" as the Roman Tarentum.

The Uncommon Tongue

The Poetry and Criticism of Geoffrey Hill

by Vincent Sherry

Vincent Sherry has described Geoffrey Hill's work as "a poetry that demands to be spoken, but sounds like nothing we've heard; out of the common material of speech it lifts the uncommon tongue." In the last three decades, Hill has established himself as a major poet. In *The Uncommon Tongue* Sherry examines the range of Hill's verse within the larger context of British and American reaction to the great literary modernists of the early twentieth century.

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Dealing with the world

Michael Rosen

JOHN RICHARDSON
Existential Epistemology: A Heideggerian critique of the Cartesian project
210pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0198249063

Few people understand Heidegger – and those who do often appear to have achieved understanding only at the price of the ability to communicate it. Not so John Richardson, however. Although a committed Heideggerian, his advocacy is thankfully free from the hermeticism which infects so much writing on the subject. *Existential Epistemology* is, indeed, a model of how to transmit the ideas of a difficult author from one tradition to another: attentive to the needs of the reader yet refusing to oversimplify the complexities of an elusive text.

The angle from which Richardson approaches Heidegger is a somewhat oblique one. Epistemology (the theory of knowledge) is a topic which Heidegger rarely addresses explicitly and so to focus interpretation on it involves, as Richardson recognizes, a substantial degree of projection of Heidegger's views beyond the text. Yet it is an approach which also has considerable advantages, most obviously in relating Heidegger's thought to a set of problems and concerns which even the most sceptical reader will acknowledge as being of central philosophical importance. In any case, Richardson's aim is not to identify a characteristically existential epistemology in Heidegger but to use the existentialist stand-

point to elaborate a critique of the epistemological enterprise itself. The Heideggerian, Richardson believes, should not set out to answer the questions of epistemology in their own terms but to dissolve (or at least disarm) the motivations which lie behind them.

According to Richardson, the central questions of epistemology are those which relate to our knowledge of the external world: Is our world a world of physical objects? Can we know that it is – or is that simply something which we naturally believe? Such questions are largely framed in terms of the concept of an *object* and thus it seems reasonable enough to suppose that our answers to them will depend on how that concept is interpreted. The natural assumption is that objects are things whose existence and nature is independent of human beings and their intentions. But, say the Heideggerians, this notion of objects as "present-at-hand" reflects only one of our ways of dealing with the world, not all of which are so neutral or so passive. When we are actively engaged with something we are aware of it in the context of a complex (and largely unconscious) web of dispositions and assumptions – in contrast to which the picture of a world of neutral objects is no more than an abstraction, the product of the "theoretical attitude".

Admittedly, our mental life is a lot more pragmatic and pre-structured than the caricature of the mind as the "mirror of nature" would suggest, but that is far from showing that the objective view of the world – or the puzzles it gives rise to – are in any way an illusion. But the Heideggerian objection is not to this theoretical attitude as such. What is wrong,

Richardson claims, is the way in which the theoretical attitude over-generalizes itself at the expense of other kinds of involvement with entities; it is this which is both the essential characteristic of the epistemological enterprise and the source of its central fallacy:

the epistemological project is precisely the attempt to ground the knowing attitude in itself – an attempt following directly from the generalizing of this attitude, from its effort to show itself complete and self-sufficient, capable of explaining everything in its own present-at-hand terms.

But how accurate is it, one might ask, to characterize epistemology in this way – more important, what does it amount to? Is epistemology supposed to be an attempt to deal with philosophical problems according to the methods and norms of the natural sciences? That, surely, is too limited; it refers, at most, to a small minority of epistemologists (and even they might balk at the idea that they were out to ground knowledge in the traditional sense). Or is the criticism more general? Is any attempt whatsoever to make epistemological questions a matter of philosophical argument an instance of trying to "ground the knowing attitude in itself"? Such a claim seems plausible only on the basis of the exceptionally restricted conception of epistemology with which Richardson is working. Philosophers could, perhaps, cure themselves of the urge to raise questions about our knowledge of the external world (non-philosophers might point out that they, at least, get along quite well without being troubled by them), but can one so easily dismiss as otiose the much broader range of problems regarding the nature of knowledge and its

scope, of which the question of our knowledge of the external world is only one? Indeed, in taking the latter as epistemology's basic question, Richardson, it might be argued, is putting the cart before the horse: problems concerning our knowledge of the external world, it could be said, are not the motivation for epistemology so much as the result of a certain form of epistemological doctrine that to know something is to be conscious of it, philosophers find themselves sliding down the slippery slope into doubting whether we can ever know anything except the contents of our own minds.

No doubt, there are responses which could be made to these objections, but here the limitations of Richardson's approach become apparent. Having introduced the reader (with all possible consideration, it must be said) to the Heideggerian conceptual framework, he conducts further argument very much from within its borders. Projected at this distance, however, Heidegger's distinctions no longer cast sharp enough shadows to define issues with precision and so the arguments presented fall some way short of conviction.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to underestimate the difficulty of the task Richardson has set himself. What divides philosophical traditions goes deeper than mere prejudice or insularity (however deplorable these may be); different approaches embody different networks of conceptual commitments and to relate them to one another requires exceptional patience, subtlety and judgment. With this assured debut Richardson has at the very least done a great deal to diminish the distance.

An accumulation of truths?

Barry Barnes

N. JARDINE
The Fortunes of Inquiry
144pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £17.50.
0198249292

A direct, unpretentious, economical and effective use of English gives immediate pleasure on a first opening of *The Fortunes of Inquiry*. Yet, slowly does one appreciate the extraordinarily high level of generality at which the argument is proceeding, and the wealth of background knowledge needed for its proper appreciation. As technical and mathematical notation eventually makes its appearance, and footnotes and references are increasingly employed to point to the prodigious implications of innocent-sounding passages, it becomes clear that Nicholas Jardine is concerned to address only a very restricted audience. This is a difficult book. Far from being recommendable to the general reader, it is a work where even the specialist will have to struggle for understanding.

Its objective is to recommend a pragmatic yet absolutist theory of truth, and to assert that truth so conceived has accumulated and will continue to accumulate within the natural sciences. Truth is absolute in that it is independent of the nature and standpoint of those seeking it. It is pragmatically defined as the eventual verdicts of particular kinds of "inquiry series", an inquiry series being defined as a temporal sequence of consensually accepted theories.

Roughly speaking, the first half of the book considers what characteristics an inquiry series should possess in order that it may be used as a standard for truth, whereas the second half defends the overall project of characterizing truth in this way. The problems of reducing one theory to another, of the underdetermination of theory by evidence, and of assessing the reliability of evidence, are all analysed in the course of this defence. Jardine recognizes the complexity and difficulty of all these issues, and the necessarily incomplete character of his account of them; he is content to show that his approach remains viable in the face of them, and to point out some of the difficulties they raise for alternative points of view.

Pragmatic accounts of truth, Jardine tells us, have to steer between "theological" orientations which, in attempting to do justice to

truth's transcendence of error, limitation, and partiality, fail to relate it sufficiently to the historical fortunes of human enquiries", and "secular" positions which "in attempting to do full justice to truth's immanence in history, deny altogether its transcendence...". This is indeed a dilemma which confronts, not just pragmatism, but the whole of modern philosophy of science. The author hints that his own position may be slightly too close to the "theological" pole. I would agree. Formally speaking, a major role is allowed for the "historical fortunes of scientific enquiry", to the extent that an absolutist account of truth in science is held to be justified inductively by aspects of the actual history of science. But that actual history is addressed only at a very general level, with the result that many of the philosophically interesting questions arising out of the details of such history do not gain consideration.

It would be wrong to criticize this brief work for failing to engage in any extended and thoroughgoing discussion of the historical episodes which are taken to substantiate and justify its philosophical claims. But equally it would be wrong to assume that whatever philosophy is at work here is a philosophy which can be read at a distance, as it were, without any particular attention to the small details of scientific activity.

Nor, indeed, does the author make any such assumption. Some of the assumptions he does make, however, might possibly have been revised in the light of more reflection on the details of history. "How many coolheaded swam in the deeps," he asks, "how many pre-odactyls flitted the skies eighty million years ago...?" And although he does not provide the figures, he has little doubt that they are unproblematically there, as it were, to be provided. "That many such questions have determinate answers is an assumption that we are exceedingly unlikely to revise."

As it happens, just this assumption is being revised at the present time: the idea that natural-kind terms like "pterodactyl" have a determinate domain of application is being called into question by reference to the vagaries of the actual usage of such terms as revealed in detailed historical studies. Whether or not this idea is discarded remains to be seen, but it is proceeding as he does on the assumption that it is correct, Nicholas Jardine passes over, unaware, well-recognized difficulties which any account of the nature of truth must properly deal with.

On not giving in

Gerald Mangan

GENE KEMP
Juniper: A mystery
112pp. Faber. £5.95.
0371129027
Mr Magnus is Waiting for You
91pp. Faber. £7.95.
0371148864

In the latest of her novels featuring Cricklepit Combined School, Gene Kemp turns her attention to the fraught home-life of one of its more disadvantaged pupils. As on only child with a withered left arm, Juniper Costello is a Synderman and a bit of a tomboy, whose domestic problems put a strain on her sense of humour. Her father is missing and wanted by the police, her feckless mother is languishing upstairs in bed, and a bully of a landlord is peering for the rent. The cat is ravenous, the kitchen shelves are bare, and there is scant comfort in the charity dispensed by a set of condescending relatives, in the form of a Christmas hamper.

Private jokes and romantic fantasy are Juniper's main refuge, and her inner world is inevitably drawn; but the outer world is not all hostile. Her teachers provide a friendly ambience in the background, and her young Indian schoolmate Ranjit gives her the sympathy of a fellow outcast. A handsome next-door lodger sometimes helps in a crisis, and his elderly Yorkshire landlady lends a ready ear to her troubles ("Let's get at it – what's botherin' you now?"). While serving hot toast in a homely kitchen. Nothing makes up for the emptiness at home, however, and Juniper's mission in life is to get things back to normal.

Dog in the attic

Peter Blake

JEAN LITTLE
Different Dragons
Illustrated by Laura Fernandez
122pp. Viking Kestrel. £5.95.
040838369

Different Dragons is designed to raise the hopes of young readers. Its title is promising. It has an illustrator (which used to be an essential sign of adventure books), its tempting table of contents includes "Mysterious noises", "Thunderstorm", "Some strange girl", "The trap door" and "Trapped". And its central adult is Aunt Rose, who "writes books filled with magical adventures... all about boys who run away from home to fight dragons". But Aunt Rose for the most part provides just cookies and ice-cream and spaghetti, and the chapters are as lacking in mystery as their titles are flimsy philosophical claims. But equally it would be wrong to assume that whatever philosophy is at work here is a philosophy which can be read at a distance, as it were, without any particular attention to the small details of scientific activity.

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Michael Morpurgo, *Why the Whales Came*
120pp. Magner. £1.75. 0 416 97090 7. First published 1985. This is an attractive piece of old-fashioned storytelling, set in the Isles of

Footlardy but resourceful, she sets out to unravel the mystery of her father's absence, and lay the ghost of his criminal reputation. With Ranjit tagging along, sketching compulsively and urging caution, her explorations uncover hidden links between the various sinister elements in the story; and her dream comes into conflict with an increasingly nightmarish reality. It is an engaging adventure in a minor key, darker in tone than the others in the series, and its amiably spiky heroine gives it a distinctive flavour of its own.

Mr Magnus is Waiting for You is a slighter book with less resonance, betraying its television connection in the text as well as on the dust-jacket, but it offers a fresh mixture of some familiar motifs. Two boys and two girls, meeting by chance in the local park one day at the end of the holidays, follow a stray football over a high wall and find themselves in the garden of an enchanted house, where a silky-voiced sorcerer sits upstairs, stroking a monster cat, and quietly awaits their arrival.

The spooky atmosphere accumulates through effective details; a welcome notice with each of their names on it, and a table groaning with goodies; a conservatory full of stuffed rodents, and mirrors turned to the wall. There is some patent contrivance in the closing-in of the trap around the foursome, and Mr Magnus himself is rather a disappointing villain, smelling a little of grease-paint and lacking in specific motives; but Kemp draws her young teenagers with telling strokes. Between the macho boy and the fat boy, the pretty girl and the swot, the mutual antagonisms work together well for the purposes of suspense; and there is a salutary moral in their varying degrees of resistance to the evil charisma.

goes to stay with Aunt Rose, who gives him a Labrador as a birthday present. The "mysterious noises" are the "whack-whack flip-flip" of the dog's tail. In the "Thunderstorm", the boy and the dog are brought together by their common fear of lightning. "The trap door" and "Trapped" take us up a ladder to the attic, where Ben and Hana – the "strange girl" ("strange" only because she likes dogs) – can't get down until Aunt Rose comes to help them, led to the foot of the ladder by the dog. The children pass the time in the once promising but now thoroughly unmythical roof-space telling "knock knock" jokes.

Jean Little, the award-winning Canadian author of *Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird* (1984), obviously confounds the expectations of her readers deliberately. Unlike Aunt Rose, her stories are not about "magical adventures" but about cancer, honesty, and the fear of dogs and heights. She clearly hopes to lure young readers to and then teach them a lesson. But the lesson is so slight that the reader risks missing it and learning instead that books are thoroughly disappointing. Adults, however, might accept this didactic play. But if they hope that they are buying a children's *Russells* – that masterpiece of teaching through thwarted expectation – even they may be disappointed when they discover that in the banality of its message what they have got instead is Topsy and Tim in novel form.

Paperbacks in brief

JEAN LITTLE, *Lost and Found*. 82pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0 14 031997 2. First published 1985. The Canadian writer Jean Little wrote the emotionally demanding *Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird*, but here her pure simple style perfectly matches her straightforward plot, and makes this a touching book for children, but still experienced, readers. When Lucy, on her first walk in her new home town, finds an appealing little dog, she tries hard to convince herself he is genuinely lost, or at least that no one could love him as much as she will; a friendly new friend makes life even harder when she finds a pet who really needs her.

Michael Morpurgo, *Why the Whales Came*. 120pp. Magner. £1.75. 0 416 97090 7. First published 1985. This is an attractive piece of old-fashioned storytelling, set in the Isles of

Through the proper channels

J. K. L. Walker

EILEEN DUNLOP
The House on the Hill
147pp. Oxford University Press. £6.95.
0192715658

Set on a steep hillside overlooking the Clyde and the tangle of modern Glasgow, The Mount, once the home of the rich Gilmore family, is the last of a row of Victorian sandstone mansions to have escaped conversion to modestly designed flats, complete with swimming-pool, patio and barbecue pit. To young Philip North, on a three-month visit while his newly widowed mother is in London on a re-training course, the overgrown garden and gloomy rooms fuel the resentment he feels towards Great-Aunt Jane Gilmore for her snobbish disregard of his parents and her failure to attend his father's funeral – confirmation, if it were needed, that the bank clerk son of a Clydebank shipworker was a poor match for a Gilmore. Nor does the presence in the house of his cousin Susan, daughter of a prosperous expatriate Gilmore, allay his suspicions; her Latin homework can only be an affront to his *Berno*-reading leisure. Luckily, there is always a refuge to be found with his friend Russell and the cheerful undemanding Cawley family in their tower-block flat.

From this initial situation Eileen Dunlop develops a classic, near-Victorian, moral tale in which ignorance, obstinacy and selfishness are conquered by the forces of love, understanding and reason. Another classic convention, that of the ghost story, acts as a catalyst for these proper sentiments, and provides considerable excitement in its own right. An empty first-floor room, once the drawing-room half a century before in Lord Provost Gilmore's heyday, is lit up at night; photographs taken with an old camera reveal shadowy furniture; a patch on the wall eerily resolves itself into a painting of Aunt Jane and her brothers as children. Slowly, through both supernatural and everyday

channels, Philip and Susan learn the secret of their great-aunt's sadness and solitude, and bring to light the truth of her apparent betrayal by her lover a few weeks before his death at Dunkirk. These three months in Philip's life are a kind of *rite de passage*, the quest itself, in company with the wiser Susan, taxing his courage which, in turn, is inspired by a growing affection for the old woman; while her dry humour and educated good sense gradually penetrate the barriers of his self-absorbed boorishness.

Miss Dunlop's view of this maturing process will not please everyone. One has to concede a degree of pedagogical cunning to a writer who can contrive the split between Philip and the under-achieving Russell Cawley on the latter's initiative because Philip has become posh, while highlighting Aunt Jane's pleasure in Mrs Cawley's recipe for redcurrant fool. Dean Farar would have rejected that one, too, because the ingredients came out of a tin. Reassuringly, for Philip, he need feel no guilt for having failed to get on with his prickly, defensive father: "We should love people who treat us with humanity, and respect our right to be ourselves and grow as we choose." Poshness has nothing to do with large rooms and now-vanished wealth but with trained intelligence and good cooking. Eileen Dunlop conveys these harsh truths with skill and good humour. Poor Russell, though.

In the most recent issue of *Children's Literature in Education* (Volume 18, Number 1, Spring 1987) Elizabeth Segal discusses the popularity of "beastly boys", the tradition of misbehaving children in children's literature from Pinocchio to Peter Rabbit and Maurice Sendak's Max, and Wendy Lake examines historical fiction with an Irish setting. Other topics in the issue include James Aldridge's novel *The True Story of Little Smuckee* and the Revd W. Awdry's Thomas the Tank Engine series. *Children's Literature in Education* is available from Geoff Fox, School of Education, University of Exeter, Exeter EX1 2LU.

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John L. Walker

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1987.
Beattie, Ann Alex Katz
New York: Abrams. 91pp., plates. \$27.50. 0 8109 1212 0.
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Columbia: Missouri UP, dist. in UK by Harper and Row. 296pp., illus. £47. 0 8262 0461 9. 4/87.

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Pandora. 160pp., plates. £9.95 (paperback). 0 86358 123 4. 3/4/87.

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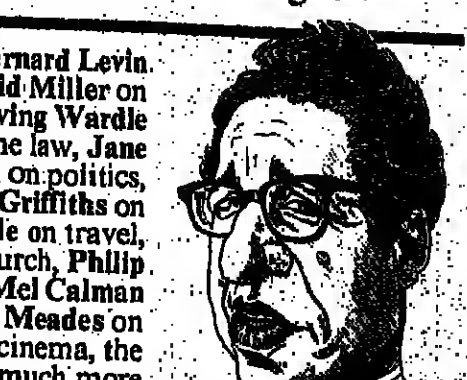
THE TIMES

Darling Lillian



Lover of Dashiell Hammett, victim of McCarthyism, dishonest inventor of her wartime experiences — playwright Lillian Hellman (left) was all of these. Next Thursday in *The Times* Books Page Peter Ackroyd reviews the first biography of her — *Lillian Hellman, The Image, The Woman*, by William Wright

and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin on the way we live now, David Miller on sport, Kenneth Flett on finance, Irving Wardle at the theatre, Frances Gibb on the law, Jane MacQuitty on wine, Geoffrey Smith on politics, Barbara Amiel's viewpoint, Paul Griffiths on music, Shona Crawford Poole on travel, Clifford Longley on the Church, Philip Howard on words, the humour of Mel Calman and Barry Fantoni, Jonathan Meades on eating out, David Robinson on the cinema, the unique *Times* crossword ... and much more



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Kloos, Mary Jo A Guide to Documentary Editing
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP. 228pp., £23.00. 0 8018 3341 8. 6/4/87.

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